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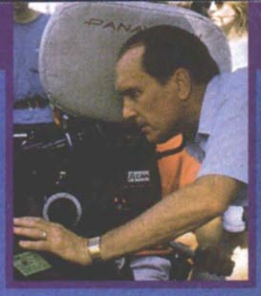

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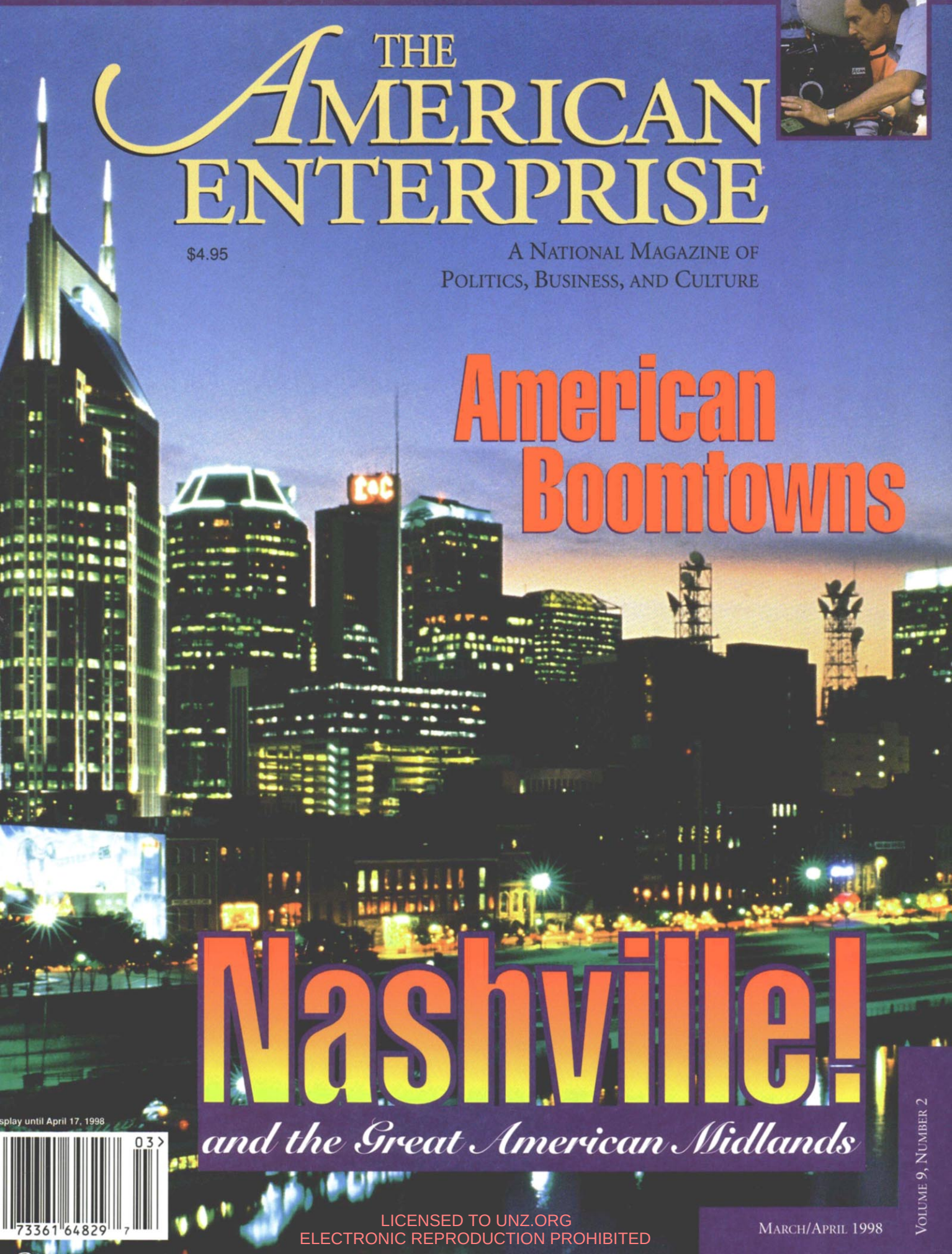

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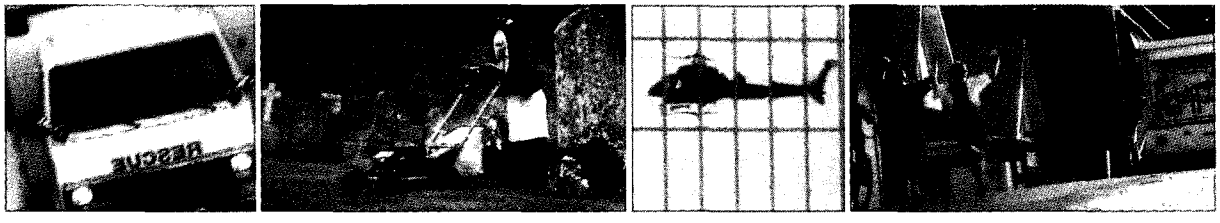

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4 BIRD'S EYE
Heroes in the Central Time Zone.

8 SIDELIGHTS
Lawyers from Hell. Day care's non-crisis. Tax cuts close the gender gap.

10 SCAN ◇ Short News and Commentary
Robert Duvall gets religion with Bill and Hillary. Wake up Capitol Hill. Gold-plated tokens. The "Decade of Greed" surprise. Sisterhood is conditional. Northern exodus. From half-baked to raw. The Old South rears its head. Visiting Mr. Winfrey.

18 "LIVE" WITH TAE.
Six country music headliners—*Trace Adkins, Bill Anderson, Eddy Arnold, Gary Chapman, Harlan Howard,* and *J. Patrick Quigley*—talk about the past and future of Nashville music.

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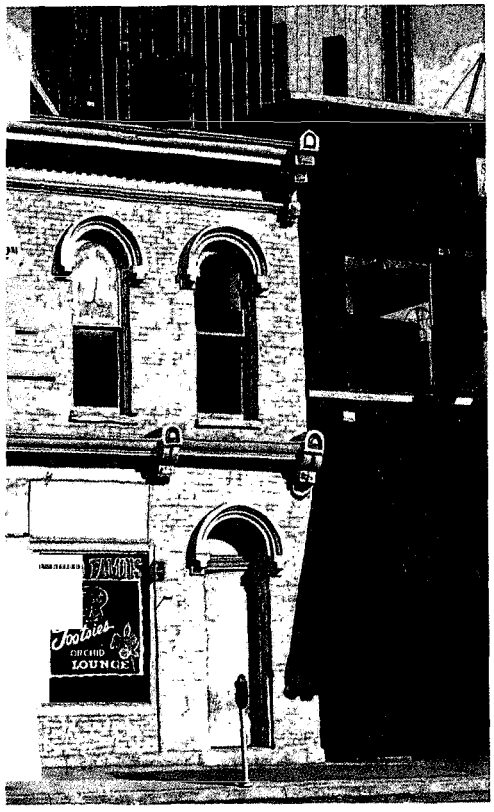

PAGE 34

22 NORMAN ROCKWELL—GREAT AMERICAN ARTIST?
Karal Ann Marling
A leading art historian argues that America's most popular artist was also an extraordinary painter of ordinary things.

28 WHY THE ELITE MEDIA DON'T UNDERSTAND AMERICA
Joel Kotkin and *David Friedman*
While Americans surge south and west, today's in-bred media elites barely see beyond the edge of Manhattan Isle.

34 NASHVILLE RIDES A WAVE
Philip Langdon
Most places would be happy to have Nashville's problem: How to keep the city booming and livable at the same time.

40 WHY DO BOOM TOWNS BOOM?
Richard Miniter
Step inside the mind of an entrepreneur and tour a place where the people are ambitious and the government is not.

44 A TENNESSEE POLITICAL RAMBLE
Bill Kauffman
Where a Yankee mayor, a dial-up governor, and Al Gore the strip-miner meet.

48 THE LAND OF HIP RELIGION
Scott Walter
A visit to the white-hot heart of the "Christian alternative universe."

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52 THE BATTLE FOR COUNTRY MUSIC'S SOUL
John Meroney with *Johnny Cash* and *Scott Walter*
Will a "new" country music lose its soul or gain the world?

60 BACK TO BASICS
Evan Gahr
Nashville has re-oriented its schools to pursue ends no longer fashionable in public education: knowledge of the basics, high objective standards, and individual excellence.

64 WELFARE REFORM SHOWCASE
Martin Morse Wooster
Public assistance rolls are shrinking at one of the fastest rates in the nation, thanks to some creative public and private efforts.

68 CAR TOWN
Blake and *Julie Hurst*
Fifteen years ago, Tennessee had *no* auto industry. Today it's the third largest vehicle-building state—and the most efficient.

PAGE 22

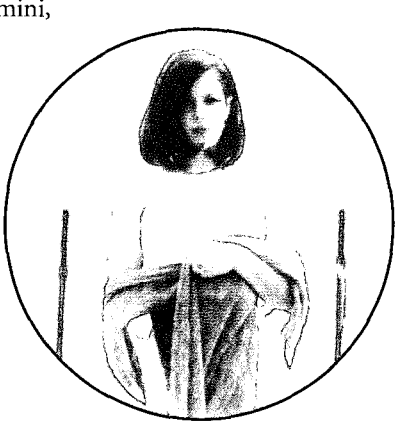
72 TRANSCRIPT ◇ Words Worth Repeating
The glory of the ordinary life.

74 IN REAL LIFE ◇ First-person America
◇ Rabbi *Mayer Schiller* on the joy of hockey.
◇ Dad *Richard Kinch* discovers that having an eighth child turns his family into celebrities.
◇ Detective *Ray Wisher* sketches the remorseless Mr. Boone.

78 THE ECONOMIST
The latest answer to income inequality: $80,000 to every 21-year-old.

78 FLASHBACK
Nashville's colorful history, from Andy Jackson to Cornelius Vanderbilt.

80 BOOK TALK
◇ Richard Norton Smith—*Daniel Webster: The Man and His Time* by Robert Remini, and *John Quincy Adams: A Public Life, a Private Life* by Paul Nagel
◇ Philip Langdon—*Shaping a Nation: Twentieth-century Architecture and Its Makers* by Carter Wiseman
◇ Daniel Mahoney—*Vindicating the Founders: Race, Sex, Class, and Justice in the Origins of America* by Thomas G. West
◇ Paul Cantor—*Literature Lost: Social Agendas and the Corruption of the Humanities* by John M. Ellis
◇ Paul Gottfried—*Downsizing the U.S.A.* by Thomas H. Naylor and William H. Willimon



PAGE 52

88 THE DIGEST ◇ Summaries of Important Research
How to fire a bureaucrat…tobacco hoax …free trade in Kansas City… America: pro-choice and pro-life…the not-so-efficient Japanese.

91 OPINION PULSE ◇ The Latest Survey Data
Southern peculiarities. Health care update. IRS popularity polls.

95 THE MAIL
Debating Reagan's tax cuts—and hikes. Rand vs. Rothbard. Socialism by a thousand cuts.

96 LAST GASP

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Bird's Eye

KARL ZINSMEISTER

The Secret Life of the American Midlands

This issue of *The American Enterprise* isn't only about Nashville. A lot of it is about your home town too.

In December we took a team of ten *TAE* editors and writers to middle Tennessee for a full week of intensive interviews and investigating. Before and after, we conducted weeks of additional research.

We chose Nashville because it's a fine illustration of America's current prosperity, but we could just as easily have gone to Indianapolis, Phoenix, Dallas, Salt Lake City, or any number of other places. Nashville (which ranks #48 nationally by metro population) is a wonderfully tangy place with many distinctive qualities of its own. In a very real sense, though, the Nashville snapshots you are about to encounter are pictures from a more universal American family scrapbook—stories from a broad midland where good and serious and amazingly productive things are accomplished every day without much national acclaim.

Most of the real work, innovation, and cultural preservation being done in America today is carried out by people laboring entirely outside the limelight. Our national media focus their collective gazes to a ridiculous degree on a few narrow (and unrepresentative) swatches of the great American quilt: New York, D.C., Hollywood, Silicon Valley, bits of Boston, Chicago. The rest of the country is mostly blacked out (until there's a multiple shooting in a McDonald's, or a dead baby in a dumpster).

Sure, Northeast Corridor snobs have always overestimated their importance, but today the national balance of power has moved so far that their narrow view is becoming a serious impediment to the country's understanding of itself. Read the essay by Joel Kotkin and David Friedman in this issue and you'll appreciate why we think it's important that citizens get more real-life reporting on developments in our nation's heartland.

So even if you've never been to Nashville, never plan to go, hate country songs, and don't care about Tennessee or the South, you need to know what's happening to America in a place as dynamic and rippling with energy as "Music City" is today.

The most obvious root of Nashville's current dynamism is economic: The place is your basic U.S. boomtown. The streets aren't paved with gold—we spoke to addicts and people in shelters, and visited several neighborhoods where I found myself watching for metallic bulges in pockets, as I used to when I lived by a D.C. public housing project. But the city as a whole has an obvious financial vigor and a rising feel of the Big Time. Within the last six years, Nashville has passed scores of other cities like Houston, Raleigh, Phoenix, Cleveland, and Kansas City in median household buying power. As it continues, an economic burst of this sort will cover a multitude of sins.

Economically, Nashville is an exemplar of something bigger: The shift of national strength southward and westward. In the latest Census Bureau ranking, all 50 of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the U.S. are located in either the South or West. Only a quarter of the individuals on the *Forbes* 400 list of wealthiest Americans now live in the Northeast (New England to D.C.), despite that region's legacy of inherited old money. The reality of this hasn't sunk in with East Coast elites, but out in many a province life is now every bit as rich and interesting as it ever was in our great older metropoli.

Following on this economic shift has been a cultural shift. The finest art collection in the country, by most reckonings, now belongs to Ft. Worth's Kimbell Museum, not New York's Metropolitan. Leading university science research has migrated away from New England and toward institutions in states like Texas, Georgia, and California. The nation's favorite form of

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music, the Harris Poll shows, is now country. Politically, there has been an obvious shift in representation—and agendas—away from the Northeast.

All of this has been characterized by Michael Lind in *The New Republic* as the "creeping Southernization of America." And he's right. But he's against it, while I, for one, am for it.

Our country is not, thank goodness, homogenized and uniform from sea to shining sea. For a group of reporters arriving from New York, Virginia, Missouri, Connecticut, D.C., and Maryland, Nashville offers plenty of distinctive colorations.

I won't traffic in stereotypes and claim that Nashvillians were the sweetest people I've ever met. Residents of upstate New York where I live are actually much friendlier. And the traffic, while nothing like what one encounters in Boston or Los Angeles, was plenty rushed and rude. It's a big city.

But the courtly helpfulness of the South was also very much in evidence, as were many other distinctively Southern qualities. When I pulled out my camera at the end of our interview with Jerry Benefield, the hard-driving Nissan USA CEO who oversees the most efficient auto manufacturing operation in the U.S. (see page 68), I was amused to watch him flip a large hunk of tobacco (actually a bitten-off cigar) out of the inside of his cheek.

When we interviewed Governor Don Sundquist a few days later, he exhibited no signs of an oral tobacco habit, but to anyone attuned to empire-building Eastern politicians, the things coming out of his mouth would have seemed almost as startling. Amidst a state-wide economic boom he spoke proudly of keeping his government on an austerity budget: "Last year, we froze employment. We reduced 1,750 jobs in the executive branch. We're in the process of combining departments. My goal is to go from 22 departments down to 11 or 12. We didn't give our state employees a raise last year." What are his ambitions for a second term? "Always: The lowest taxes. Fewest regulations. Least amount of paperwork."

This is apparently more than just rhetoric, for Tennessee currently enjoys close to the lowest per capita taxes in the entire U.S. The state legislature meets for only two or three months per year, and the whole government is decidedly un-imperial. It's literally harder to enter my county courthouse than it was to walk into the office of Tennessee's governor. This is not due to nicer politicians; it's what the public demands. "We have a tradition in Tennessee of less government," acknowledges the governor.

Among the numerous war memorials strung around the State Capitol you can find ample evidence of another noble quirk of the American southland: deep respect for martial achievement. The two heavily armed G.I.s who make up the Korean War statue sit on a pedestal with a stern six word inscription: "Where communistic military aggression was defeated." A behemoth copper form of Alvin York staring down a bayoneted Enfield commemorates the day in October 1918 when "one Tennessean armed with rifle and pistol silenced a German battalion of 35 machine guns, killing 25 enemy soldiers and capturing 132." They don't call it the Volunteer State for nothing.

An emphasis on honor is yet another Southern quality with deep roots, and one apparently not dead yet. A plaque prominently displayed at the entrance to the Vanderbilt Student Center reads: "Today I am going to give you two examinations, one in trigonometry and one in honesty. I hope you will pass them both, but if you must fail one, let it be trigonometry." The center is named for the author of that statement, Madison Sarratt, and the plaque was installed in 1993 by the "Undergraduate Honor Council."

Probably the aspect of Nashville that is most distinctive (it drives many of these other qualities) is the city's muscular religiosity. This is a place where religion is very close to the surface of everyday life. You see it in obvious and subtle ways. When we stopped in at Jack's Bar-B-Que the juke box was playing blues, but there was a nativity scene set up on a table near the exit (it was mid-December). The city's numerous *live* nativity scenes are famously grand—some of them featuring hundreds of people and animals gathered in re-created villages.

In all, there are something like 800 places of worship in Nashville—the city has the highest ratio of churches per capita of any place in the nation. And they are packed.

Not only are they packed; they are alive. There is, again, a Southern tradition here. In the South, wrote novelist Flannery O'Connor, religion exists "in a concrete form, known and held sacred by the whole community.... Abstractions, formulas, laws will not serve here." And this, she notes, has effect. "Our response to life is different if we have been taught only a definition of faith than if we have trembled with Abraham as he held the knife over Isaac." After attending numerous church services in a range of venues, your editors can attest that there are hundreds of thousands of Nashvillians still capable of trembling with Abraham.

One of the ways locals put their faith into service is by ministering to the rest of the nation. One of Nashville's several nicknames is "the Protestant Vatican," reflecting the fact that the city is home to an astonishing number of church publishers, mission headquarters, and Christian artists who churn out religious products and services for use all across the USA. (See Scott Walter's article on page 48, and sidebar on page 58.)

Another way residents act on their religious conviction is by living their own lives differently. "This is a city with such high moral standards, a city full of such good people," says Victor Bautista, a Hispanic immigrant to Nashville. This comes into play in very specific ways. One little instance: There is no state lottery or gambling (that can now be said of only two other states). A deeper ramification is visible in IRS data showing that Tennessee is the third most generous state in America (after Utah and Wyoming) when it comes to donating to charity. Apparently taking Jesus' Great Commandment to "love one another" to heart, locals give away *twice* as much each year, on average, as New Englanders do.

Another practical effect of an active religious culture can be seen inside the big Baptist Bookstore that sits in the heart of downtown. In addition to books, the store sells a lot of recorded music from its heavily stocked shelves, and there are special procedures that allow for opening and listening to any tape or CD for sale. Literally most titles in many sections had an opened al-

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bum marked "Demo" in orange. Parents and kids were carefully checking liner notes, and dozens of shoppers were taking advantage of plentiful listening stations to preview the products before buying. This is the intersection of modern consumerism with contemporary Christian culture, and it yields a city where fewer families end up bringing home albums that urge teenagers to "f- - - the police" and "kill the wh- - -."

As I watched in the children's book section, another parent very politely pointed out to a manager that one of the store's picture books on the Ten Commandments left out an injunction, separating another into two parts so there were still ten. "This isn't right. Some kids still memorize these, and they ought to be correct," she stated quietly. Then she added with a laugh, "I'm not sure we can make things much better today, but at least we can avoid letting them get worse." The manager answered that he'd see about returning the books.

As a mecca for country, gospel, bluegrass, western and other forms of "music for the common man," Nashville has become a rare kind of cultural nerve-center. "Never before has a major contemporary genre of American music had so long and so deeply entrenched a relationship with a single city," writes author Dan Daley. "The only other such relationship that comes to mind is Hollywood and the film industry."

And it makes a big difference when a major entertainment industry is located in a place like middle Tennessee rather than, say, Los Angeles or New York. Some prominent Nashville musicians now meet regularly in small groups called "Covenant Artist Communities" where they encourage one another and hold themselves accountable. They ask each other how their family lives are going, what they're doing to nurture their marriages and their spiritual lives, how they're handling their finances, how they guard against celebrity temptations.

When an attention-seeking artist strutted down Nashville's Music Row in 1996 wearing nothing but her cowboy hat and boots, she not only received no record deal, she received a citation for indecent exposure. Describing Nashville as "the patron city of the radical middle," entertainment industry writer Bruce Feiler says its products are now much more closely aligned with mainstream suburban America than the output of any of our other cultural capitals.

One of the reasons more people listen to country music every week than voted in Bill Clinton is because it's written for grown-ups. As Americans have aged, they've migrated toward themes that have long been Nashville bedrock. Feiler points out in *The New Republic* that "While most pop music was still focused on sex, drugs, and other forms of license...country pounded out tales of love, heartache, family ties, and middle-aged renewal." In country music, he notes, "morality is hip" and "despair is surmountable," lending a "quiet optimism" that is in keeping with the national mood.

Warner/Reprise record executive Eddie Reeves states simply that "country music is about family values and everyday life." Vanderbilt professor Cecilia Tichi, sounding very professorial, says "country music puts home's enveloping love and kindness against materialism, social status, hurdles of heirarchy, and all sorts of false values." Dan Daley argues it is "a music that is fundamentally conservative at its core," which "satisfies a need to touch, even if figuratively, more traditional values." Noting that Nashville music is "much more clearly about core American values than anything coming out of Seattle or New York in the last ten years," Feiler suggests that the popularity of country today is "one of the most vivid examples of America's reigning backlash against its own culturally liberal past."

Even performers who are pushing Nashville more in the direction of other pop music (like Garth Brooks) continue to be closer to middle-class values than other popular musicians. When the rock performer Bono spouted at the 1994 Grammy telecast that he intended to "f- - - the mainstream," Brooks begged to differ. "The message I would send to the youth," he answered in his own acceptance speech, "is not to screw up the mainstream." On Brooks' latest album, *Sevens*, he continues in a heavily pop-influenced style. But he also records a gospel song written by bluegrass performer Carl Jackson, draws on acoustic traditions through musicians like Tim O'Brien and Benita Hill, includes Christian-music star Susan Ashton as a feature vocalist, and otherwise reveals his Nashville setting.

How steadfastly Nashville's music-makers will defend heartland values in coming decades is a big open issue. Powerful new forces like Garth Brooks' marketer-in-chief, Capitol Records CEO Pat Quigley, are now actively working against Nashville's distinctive culture and trying to produce a music that will appeal more to someone in San Francisco or the Hamptons (see LIVE, and John Meroney's feature article on page 52). As Nashville has attracted both the sentiments and the discretionary spending of the American public, it has also attracted opportunists from both coasts. The big question is whether they will eat Nashville, or Nashville will eat them.

Bluegrass musicians sometimes use the phrase "Saturday night and Sunday morning" to encapsulate the dual poles of their world. Saturday night produces the smoky creative jams, the honky-tonking love songs, the rowdy, lightning-fast solo instrumental breaks. Sunday morning brings the sacred tunes, the confessional ballads, the beautiful, spare, tight-harmony "stained glass" repertoire.

As it booms, there is a kind of Saturday night/Sunday morning aspect to Nashville too: There are growth vs. preservation questions, urban/rural poles, Old South/New South tensions. There is the binge-and-purge pattern in the city's high-visibility entertainment industry. Business people face choices between living well and doing right. Reconciliations have long been necessary in this area between the yeoman/Republican culture of eastern Tennessee and the plantation/Democrat heritage of the west.

Right at Nashville's core there exists a complicated blend of the sacred and profane. Take the city's signature landmark, the Ryman Auditorium. Blue-eyed, blond, fast-running riverboat captain Thomas Ryman had it built as a tabernacle for evangelizing and preaching of the gospel, after he'd had his life turned around by the fiery sermons of the dark, mustachioed, chestnut-eyed Reverend Sam Jones. Later, it was converted into the highly commercial home of the Grand Ole Opry (the first

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national broadcast entertainment built on advertising). Today the Opry has moved on to new digs, and the Ryman is a high mix of church and gin joint in its programming.

Welcome to the American experiment: where Saturday night and Sunday morning, economic and religious, physical and cerebral, high and low are often so intertwined as to become inseparable. Faced with choosing between order and growth, safety and opportunity, morality and riches, personal responsibility and individual freedom, Americans have always answered: I'll take both. Pulling off repeated syntheses of these competing human impulses is inherently difficult, and we have never been fully successful. But that attempt has been the source of much of our national inventiveness and accomplishment.

The central national act of marrying European refinement with North American vigor has itself been a great synthesis. An excellent Nashville illustration of this is Thomas Nelson Publishers, the world's largest Bible-seller and a company that makes lots of money publishing religious material like novels, devotionals, CD-ROMs, and children's books. The tale begins far away from Nashville, in Edinburgh, Scotland, where Mr. Nelson opened a bookshop and then a print house with the aim of getting Scriptures into the hands of as many poor people as possible.

Nelson was the first book company to use salesmen, the inventor of rotary printing, and the eventual creator of 1,300 different versions of the Bible, including major translations like the Revised Standard Version. But by the 1960s the company had moved away from its religious roots, sales had collapsed, and the old British firm was dying. Then a Lebanese immigrant who had come to the U.S. as a 19-year-old to attend Bible college, become a door-to-door Bible salesman, and eventually an extremely successful (and still very pious) businessman, bought Nelson and breathed new life into it in Nashville—where it now thrives, once again focused on religious material. That is a story of American recombination, renewal, and improvement of an inherited legacy.

In a similar way, many of the basic tunes and emotions of traditional American country music go back as far as medieval-to-Elizabethan-era Britain, Scotland, and Ireland. Lots of the original ballads and melodies eventually died off in Europe, but were preserved and embellished by emigrants in the self-contained hollows of Appalachian America. Eventually, thanks to the technology, finance, and marketing skills of some Nashville businessmen and artists, many of those same chords and vocalizations were relaunched on the world in new forms. Some of them have even traveled back to ancient Europe and stirred the hearts of business-suit-wearing Celts. A strange irony.

Nashvillians are carrying out variations of the great American experiment all around their city—attempting creative recombinations in fields like city design, music, religion, social welfare, politics, and business. Like other successful Americans they're trying to meld modern forms with ancient truths, economic progress with cultural remembering, personal freedom with private virtue. And so far, most of their executions seem to be working. But this is always a difficult and risky task. It is easy to overshoot, to lose track of first principles.

The best way to navigate between continuity and progress is to let individual actors make their own trials and errors and then carefully separate successes from failures. You simply can't write a formula for the growth of a new town, or the composition of a moving song, or the evolving of a church's mission. These things have to be worked out as you go.

On the Saturday night when we visited backstage at the Grand Ole Opry broadcast, there was no discernible direction. Talented people walked on stage, and things just flowed. Likewise, no state development agency could ever do for the Nashville economy what her front-line entrepreneurs are accomplishing today (see Rich Miniter's article on boom towns).

Nor could any engineer ever orchestrate the millions of processes carried out every shift in the Nissan plant we toured south of Nashville. It's simply too complex. All you can do is set up good ground rules and then give the plant's 6,000 individual workers the freedom and responsibility to solve problems one at a time. They are your strength.

Ultimately, Nashville's success or failure—and America's—will depend on the subtle judgments her everyday citizens make in the quiet of their workshops and homes and offices. Elites standing in the limelight will, like it or not, have a limited role.

If this issue had a theme song it would be the remarkable sermon by Nashville pastor Stan Mitchell that we've condensed on pages 72-3. I urge you not to miss it; you might even read it before anything else in the issue. Mitchell's insistence on the "glory of the ordinary" is not only a Christian article of faith but also the central insight of American democracy. Our great infantrymen, engineers, mothers, and shopkeepers have a whole lot more to do with us being a great nation than do our presidents, principals, and chiefs. Likewise, it is our Nashvilles far more than our New York Citys that have separated our young civilization from history's heap.

Unfortunately, the New Yorks refuse to recognize this. They are utterly dismissive of Middle America and show no interest in understanding it. The example of Norman Rockwell—reviewed in an essay at the beginning of our feature section by the distinguished art historian Karal Ann Marling—provides a perfect example of this divide. "Rockwell's pictures lived in the world of ordinary things," Marling notes, "ordinary, everyday places beatified by light and by the artist's scrupulous attention to their angles and corners and timeworn surfaces." With that in mind, ask yourself: Is there any painter more loved by regular people and more hated by elites than Norman Rockwell? After studying this disagreement at book length, Marling comes to a striking conclusion: The people are right; the elites are wrong.

We must recognize the beauty and power and importance of the everyday. We must trust the radical middle. For when Middle Americans stand and fill their places, the ordinary does indeed trickle up into something glorious.

"We're betting on the success of our people," Gov. Sundquist told us.

In the end, so am I.

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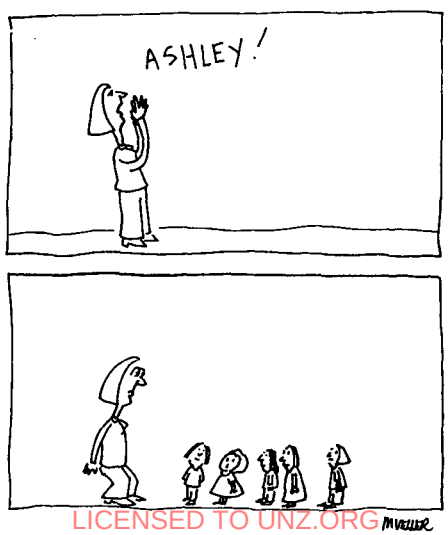
Sidelights

Of Counsel, a catalogue that sells "gifts for your favorite lawyers," offers such items as an "I ♥ Rich Clients" mug and T-shirts with the slogans, "I Live for Loophole$," "Lawyer from HELL," and "I'm no lady. I'm a lawyer." ❧ **Bill Clinton** beat out actress **Pamela Anderson Lee** and MTV's **Jenny McCarthy** to win Bikini.com's "Who would you most like to see in a bikini?" poll. ❧ *I Still Miss My Man But My Aim Is Getting Better* is a mystery novel starring an aspiring Nashville songstress. ❧ Before Paulagate exploded, President Clinton's former White House chief of staff **Leon Panetta** said, "I'm willing to bet that within two years of retirement he'll be running for office again." ··· Now lobbying for governmental restrictions on Microsoft's Internet business, former presidential candidate **Robert Dole** writes of the "need to educate the public, the administration, and Congress about the dangers of a laissez-faire attitude toward Microsoft." ❧ Non-crisis: In a poll of parents of young children, only 13 percent said finding child care was "a major problem," reports columnist **Maggie Gallagher**. Another poll asked Americans to name the top 2-3 issues they'd like to see "Washington do something about." Day care was the choice of 1 percent. ❧ "Sending women off to war should not be seen as progress but rather as a retreat to barbarism," writes **Danielle Crittenden** in *Women's Quarterly*. "For what is more barbaric than a society willing to send mothers—and potential mothers—into war?" ··· Referring to the flap over **Larry Lawrence**'s burial, pundit **Sally Quinn** says, "It seems like a total guy thing...this whole macho thing of wanting to be buried in Arlington National Cemetery.... I don't think a group of women Republicans would ever get up to" something like this. ❧ The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports a 38 percent increase in the number of females arrested between 1986-95. The number of men arrested rose 12 percent.

"Contrary to what some people claim," says **Jeffrey Yablon** of *Tax Notes*, "the tax laws have a lot of respect for logic. They use it so sparingly." ··· Gender gap-closer? An American Viewpoint poll found working women would prefer to use any surplus federal budget revenues to cut taxes rather than reduce the deficit. ··· "This whole business about cutting the deficit is a façade," **Tricia Kinch** told the *Washington Times*. The 45-year-old public-relations consultant, who is black, added that "the only thing tangible Congress can do is cut taxes." ❧ For the first time, a majority of parents with children in public school endorse vouchers, Gallup reports. ❧ Twenty-one percent of companies surveyed by the National Association of Manufacturers said they had cancelled plans for new products because of a shortage of skilled labor. ··· The U.N. International Labor Organization says worldwide union membership has fallen steeply in the last decade, due in part to a decline in government jobs. ❧ By nearly two to one, voters prefer more effective enforcement of existing campaign-finance laws over passing new ones, according to a poll for *Campaigns and Elections* magazine.



··· Though an advocate of campaign-finance reform, Sen. **John Kerry** (D-Mass.) accepted $10,000 from controversial fund-raiser **Johnny Chung** and arranged for Chung's associates to meet with Securities and Exchange Commission regulators, the *Los Angeles Times* reports. Kerry eventually returned the money. ❧ AEI fellow **William Schneider** observes that "those who never went to church voted for Clinton, 62-22 percent. Those who attended church more than once a week went for **Dole**, 60-33 percent." ❧ "She was a wonderful mom. But she knew she was going to die, and she didn't want to take two lives," **Quashetta Simpson**, 13, told the *Washington Times*. Her pregnant mother chose death rather than cancer treatments that might have harmed her unborn child, who was delivered safely. ❧ The Center for Equal Opportunity reports an outbreak of political correctness at Greyhound, where an arbitrator recently ordered the company to reinstate a bus driver who was so drunk she urinated on herself during a Breathalyzer test. ··· The Army now runs all-Spanish recruiting ads on cable TV ··· Columnists **Reed Irvine** and **Joe Goulden** note that, according to the National Center for Health Statistics, "the years of potential life lost from AIDS are 24 percent greater than the loss from lung cancer deaths." Yet although AIDS, like smoking, is connected to "lifestyle choice," the Clinton administration criticizes only smokers. ··· At Turner Broadcasting, smoking is grounds for termination. ··· In Hillsborough, New Jersey, Halloween and St. Valentine's Day are *verboten*, replaced by "fall festival celebration" and "special person day." ❧ More country song titles: "She Made Toothpicks Out of the Timber of My Heart," "You Can't Have Your Kate and Edith Too," and "You're the Reason Our Kids Are So Ugly."

—SW

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3 ways pharmaceuticals are ganging up against healthcare costs.

$600-million/yr. potential savings with a blood thinning drug which can prevent 40,000 strokes/yr. associated with atrial fibrillation.

Source: Port Study, AHCPR

$23,000 saved per yr. per patient with a schizophrenia drug which allows for outpatient treatment.

Source: American Psychiatry, 1993

$1-billion/yr. potential savings with ACE inhibitors which can prevent one-third of hospitalizations due to heart failure.

Source: SOLVD Study, 1991

Pharmaceutical Research And Manufacturers Of America

PhRMA 1100 Fifteenth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005 http://www.phrma.org

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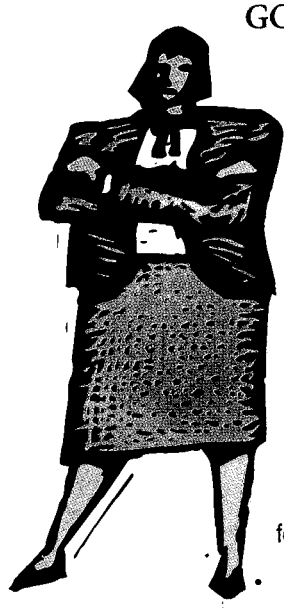
SCAN

GOLD-PLATED TOKENS



Under the headline "Why does the Women's Studies department have more faculty than students?" the *Cornell Review* noted that while the Women's Studies department offered 31 courses in a previous semester, the median number of students per class was just four. Fully 123 professors were counted as part of the department.

WAKE-UP CALL FOR CAPITOL HILL

Earlier this winter, President Clinton was once again handing the Republicans in Congress their heads—ginning up public enthusiasm for large expansions of government in the name of children, health care, and education. He even showed signs that he might be able to reverse the great defeat of his first term, the failure to pass HillaryCare. In a little-noticed talk to a friendly union audience, Clinton said, "What I tried to do before [a one-step takeover of the U.S. health care system] won't work. Maybe we can do it in another way, a step at a time until eventually we finish this."

It's only thanks to the President's appalling character that his efforts to regulate HMOs, launch a new $22 billion day-care program, add lots more wealthy Americans to Medicare, and fatten up education bureaucracies were temporarily put on hold.

May we suggest that now is the time for advocates of lean government to make a counter-offensive?

We've argued the point before in these pages, but it seems not to have sunk in with the American public (or even with the leaders of the GOP Congress): *The U.S. tax burden has never been worse than it is now.* Though our plucky President had the nerve to claim in his State of the Union that "we have the smallest government in 35 years," tax collections by the federal government reached a high of 21.4 percent of GDP in the third quarter of 1997 (the latest data available). That total was 19.0 percent when Clinton took office, and it has averaged just 18.5 percent over the last 50 years. Even amidst the crisis of World War II, the total weight of federal, state, and local taxes on Americans was less heavy than it is now.

Total federal, state, and local taxes paid by the median two-earner family jumped from $8,089 (28 percent of income) in 1955 to $22,521 (38 percent) in 1997 (both figures expressed in constant '97 dollars). Think how much you pay each year for housing, for food, for clothing, and for medical care. Now *combine* all that spending on those four categories. If you are a median family, you pay *more* than that total for taxes. (Everything else in your life is paid for by the 24 percent of your income that's left.)

If typical Americans knew that nearly four dollars out of every ten they earn are now vacuumed off by government, they'd be in revolt. Only because many of these taxes are invisible (hidden as employer taxes, sales taxes, or business levies) do Americans keep quiet.

An intelligent, forceful campaign to explain these facts, and then propose some crisp, across-the-board tax cutting—say, enough to return the tax burden to its average level in the 1950-90 period (which would mean about a 15 percent federal tax cut)—would be a winner economically and politically. The ideal solution would be to radically simplify taxes at the same time they're cut, *à la* a flat tax.

Alternatively, GOP leaders could spend the next few months quietly researching new initiatives in skiing safety, road paving, and zoo improvement. By which time there's a good chance Bill Clinton, the cat of 90 lives, will be ready to crank up his "government must do more" machine again.

Your choice, Congress.

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SISTERHOOD IS CONDITIONAL

As we go to press, it is nearly two weeks after news broke that the President may have seduced a 21-year-old intern *and* pawed a married woman who apparently came to the Oval Office to ask for a job because her husband was in trouble at work. Has there yet been the usual chorus of outrage on the subject from Anita Hill's warrior feminist friends? Perhaps just a stern noting that this is a serious issue?

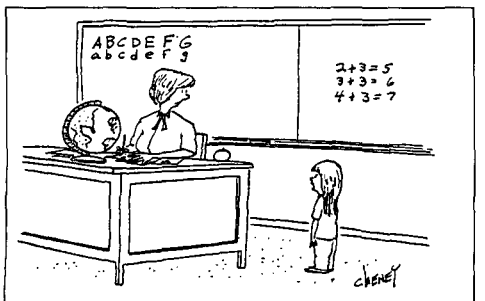
Has Patricia Schroeder reminded the nation of the importance of "speaking truth to power"? Has Barbara Boxer jumped behind any podiums recently to rattle on about workplace sexual harassment? Where is Susan Faludi, who sees anti-female oppression everywhere else in American society? And what about Patricia Ireland, usually so quick on the trigger? Two weeks into the century's starkest allegations of workplace victimization of weak women by a strong man and she's invisible. Nowhere to be seen. Perhaps she just had her wisdom teeth removed or something.

This embarrassingly partisan feminist silence follows on a period of months where the great crusaders against sexual exploitation not only failed to champion the cause of clerk Paula Jones v. President Bill Clinton, but actually piled onto her with hints that she must be a crybaby or hussy who had it coming.

Ellen Goodman, usually so sensitive to slights to womanhood, opined that "it's not even clear" if Jones' story "fits the charges of harassment, or the 'intentional infliction of emotional distress,'" and that "if Bill were just another Joe, Paula Jones would have trouble getting a lawyer." Tell it to Clarence Thomas, lady.

Betty Friedan adds, apparently with a straight face (although it's hard to tell in her case) that "I abhor the use of a sexual issue." Bill Clinton's sexual antics are "his business," and Paula Jones' harassment suit is a "diversion," writer Noemie Emery quotes Friedan saying.

"If Bill Clinton were a CEO, an Army drill sergeant, or an assembly-line foreman," columnist Linda Chavez observes, "the feminists would be out for blood. With everyone else in the nation talking about little else, feminist leaders' silence speaks volumes about their willingness to put politics before principle."



Permission—Cartoon Features Syndicate

"Miss Jones, may I make a phone call to see how my mutual fund is doing?

REVIEWING THE "DECADE OF GREED" SCRIPT

No one who had functioning ears and eyes in the 1980s will ever forget the econo-political riff drummed into our skulls by the national media during the Reagan era. "The rich are getting richer! The poor are getting poorer!" Year after year, story after story, that little morality tale was endlessly repeated, regurgitated, and flogged nearly to death.

Each release of poverty statistics became an event. Correspondents and news anchors on million-dollar salaries would furrow their flawless faces and speak gravely about Census Bureau data on changing income distributions. Previously obscure talking heads like Kevin Phillips became media celebrities as they droned on and on about "quintiles," "Gini coeffients," and shocking new proof of "inequality in America."

The conventional wisdom adamantly held (and still holds) that what we lived through in the the 1980s was a "failure of trickle-down economics," which brutally divided the world into "haves" and "have nots." Bill Clinton and Al Gore were elected in large measure to put an end to this era of greed and calloused cruelty. They thundered in their speeches and their book *Putting People First* that "poverty has exploded," and the American dream is being stolen by "those at the top."

And, sure enough, the man from Hope has turned this around. The stories about poor people and food kitchens and homeless families have mostly disappeared. We haven't seen a poverty statistic or Gini coefficient invoked on the evening news since, well, about 1992. National news reports are now chock full of stories about a bubbling stock market, with no complaints about wealthy people building more wealth. Thank goodness that old trickle-down economics is gone, right?

Not quite. What's so annoying about fads in media-think is how rarely the pontificators get called to account if it turns out they were peddling misleading information. Statistics, on the other hand, can be stacked up side by side for *objective* comparisons of different eras. And if you compare the objective record of economic trends in the Reagan era with those same trends in the Clinton era, one thing is crystal clear: Those reporters and commentators who fell silent in the 1990s after insisting the sky was falling in the 1980s were either ignorant or biased. Here are the relevant figures, taken from the U.S. Bureau of the Census:

	1980	'89	'96
Incomes ratio— 80th percentile compared to 20th percentile	4.2:1	4.4:1	4.6:1
Actual household income (average for poorest 20 percent, in constant '96 $)	$8,547	$8,884	$8,596
National poverty rate	13.0%	12.8%	13.7%

"On virtually every measure, income inequality and poverty are worse in Bill Clinton's 1990s than in Ronald Reagan's

MAJESTY OF THE OFFICE

From Ronald Reagan: How An Ordinary Man Became an Extraordinary Leader, *by Dinesh D'Souza:*

Michael Deaver once noticed the president was perspiring in the Oval Office and asked him to take off his coat, as he had frequently done as governor of California. "Oh no," Reagan replied. "I could never take my coat off in this office." Except for the few occasions when he returned from an event in which he was casually attired, Reagan always dressed formally at his post in the White House. Unlike Jimmy Carter, he never conducted business in slacks and a sweater. Reviewing state papers in a jogging suit or shorts and T-shirt, as Bill Clinton does, would have struck Reagan as appallingly arrogant.

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1980s," observes economist David Dodenhoff of the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute.

So are things less good economically today than they seem? No, current reports are right: These are happy economic times for the nation, and only a fool or ingrate would deny that.

Our point is simply that the 1980s were *also* happy economic days. Indeed, measured by the indices that the liberal media harried Ronald Reagan over (how equally income is distributed, and where the poverty rate stands), the '80s left us even "better" off than today.

So the question arises: Why did 13 percent poverty and a 4.4-to-1 ratio of upper to lower incomes inspire shrieks in the 1980s, while 14 percent poverty and a 4.6-to-1 income ratio are treated as normal today? Why all the images of "needy vs. greedy" then, and the friendly photographs of shoppers in malls and a President vacationing on Martha's Vineyard and Caribbean islands now?

Poverty economist Dodenhoff puts it bluntly this way: "A great many people owe Ronald Reagan an apology."

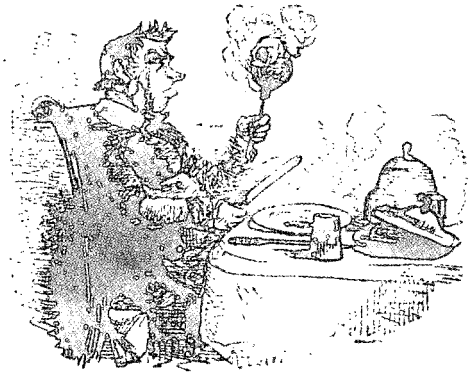
FROM HALF-BAKED TO RAW

Because happiness is knowing that the opposition has gone looney, we at *TAE* do our best to keep you filled in on new developments at the frontiers of political correctness. But, boy, it's getting harder every year to follow the trail.

The latest wrinkle on vegetarianism, the Associated Press recently reported, is the "Raw" movement. "After giving up meat for vegetarian cooking...and sugar for macrobiotic cooking, 70 New Yorkers have gathered to get serious about the way they eat: They've given up cooking." Yup: No boiling, no baking, no stoves.

These pioneers are devotées of so-called "live" foods. They refer to the cooked foods other people eat as "dead." A movement spokeswomen, who goes by the single name Rhio, explains that "foods start losing some enzymes and life energy at 105 degrees. By 118 degrees, that's it. You've killed all the life energy. This is the way we're really supposed to eat. This is the way the animals eat."

There are now live-food support



groups, a newly opened restaurant in New York called Ozone, and a raw-food cable TV show. Dr. Ann Wigmore, a mother of the movement, founded live-food centers in Boston and Puerto Rico before she died in 1994 (in a fire).

Devotées don't just eat endless carrots out of the bag, mind you. Raw food chefs (probably best not to call them "cooks") do process food—but through soaking and chopping instead of using heat. "You could take a drinking straw to much of the plate, like a vegetable Slurpee," notes Ellen Knickmeyer, a reporter who attended a live-food potluck in a Tribeca loft. On the menu at the event: A "lasagna" made of sprouted buckwheat, almonds, mushrooms, tomatoes, and figs. A "cheese" of pulverized almonds. A "champagne" of "something sprouted and fermented."

In an interesting twist, there are live-food omnivores who have no problem with eating meat, so long as it isn't cooked. Other raw advocates have gone the opposite direction—there are "fruititarians" (who eat only raw fruit), and "sproutitarians" (live sprouts solely). There are even non-violent fruititarians "who eat only fruits off the ground, not those that have been picked."

That may seem to be the final climax of vegetarianism. But there is one higher twist. Rhio reports there are "breatharians" who aim to get "all the nutrition they need from the air.... I've met some people doing it occasionally, but they're not at 100 percent. Yet."

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EXODUS II

More than five decades after millions of African Americans fled the poverty and racial subjugation of the South for greener pastures in the North, a return exodus is now in full swing. The grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the black migrants who traded Atlanta's plantations for Detroit's auto factories and Pittsburgh's mills are now returning in droves to the newly dynamic black communities of the former Confederacy.

Every state in the Old South, reports the Census Bureau, has shown a yearly increase in its black population since 1990, with the 1990-95 total amounting to 370,000 migrants. Atlanta, voted the best city for blacks by 100 prominent African Americans in *Ebony*'s September issue, has become "the new mecca for blacks," home to over 200,000 African-American newcomers during the 1980s alone.

"For Atlanta's African Americans, the big population increase is in the suburbs, where the number of blacks increased by about 40 percent between 1980 and 1990," reports the *Washington Times*. "Areas such as Decatur and Stone Mountain are 'buppie' (black urban professional) heaven."

By contrast, a recent report from the University of Pittsburgh found that many northern cities rate poorly for minorities because of poor business climate and a resulting lack of job growth. When the supply of new jobs is increasing slowly, employers are less likely to take a chance on minority hires, and during company downsizing it's frequently blacks, the last hired, who are first fired—as union contracts commonly mandate.

"For 20 years now," says Ohio University economist Richard Vedder, "Americans have been voting with their feet against the high taxes and debilitating policies of the Northeast." Crippling the competitiveness of the Northeast are its bloated political bureaucracies, powerful unions, hordes of business-bashers, lawyers, vulture regulators, and redistributionists, who are driving out both entrepreneurs and the majority of the region's college graduates—a massive brain drain.

"The Northeast is dying, victim of the same sclerosis now paralyzing most of welfare-state Europe," contends Stephen Moore, director of fiscal policy studies at the Cato Institute in Washington, D.C. Who's left behind in many cases are "welfare recipients, government workers, senior citizens, and university professors," says Moore, as others migrate to the "more economically robust and culturally normal places like Georgia, North Carolina, Florida, and Texas."

Cheryl McCalla is a recent migrant to Atlanta. "You get a lot more for your money here," says McCalla, who is 30, African-American, and formerly a Brooklyn resident. "I was tired of the hustle and bustle of New York." Someone like her, earning $80,000 in Brooklyn, pays $17,100 in state and local taxes, versus $9,800 in Atlanta.

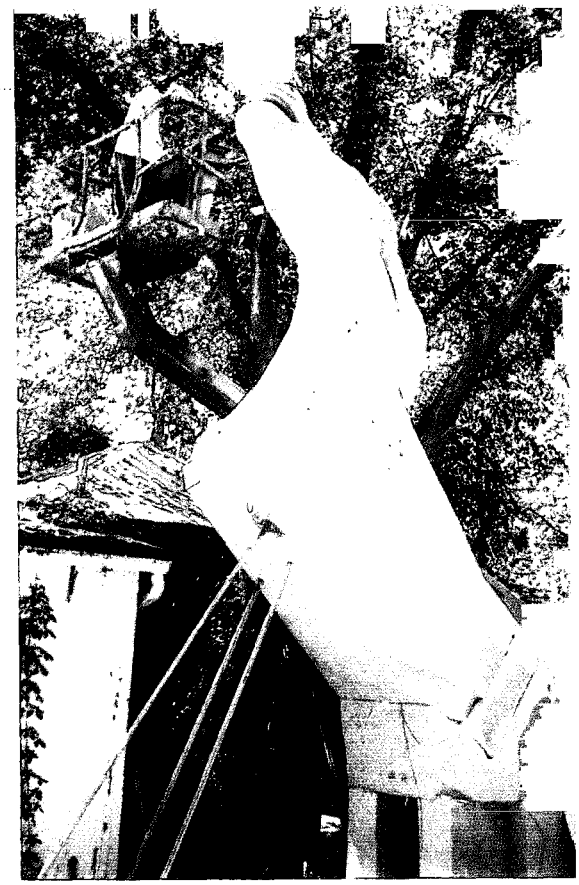
And then there are the intangibles. "You can't get any good grits or sweet peas anywhere north of Maryland," Donna Ivry told the *Times*. An African-American physician who moved to Atlanta after living in Florida, New Jersey, and Maryland, Ivry says, "Here I can afford to buy a house and have a decent standard of living. Here I can make a home. In the North, you were out there on your own. It was cold and unfriendly."

—Ralph R. Reiland is associate professor of economics at Robert Morris College.

OLD SOUTH REARS ITS HEAD ALONG INTERSTATE

When Robert E. Lee was asked, at Appomattox, to name the greatest soldier of the Confederacy, he replied, "A man I have never seen, sir. His name is Forrest."

Come May, Forrest will be hard to miss amongst the trees off Interstate 65, seven miles south of Nashville. An 84-year-old lawyer-sculptor named Jack Kershaw is putting the finishing touches on a 25-foot-high equestrian statue of General Nathan Bedford Forrest, a man renowned for having had 29 horses shot out from under him in the midst of battle. We've seen the work, and the Old South paladin and his steed look as if they're ready to charge passing commuters.



Jack Kershaw and sculpture in progress.

General Forrest is enjoying an improbable revival—thanks to the anecdotes Shelby Foote told about him in Ken Burns's Civil War series on PBS, and the recent re-issue of Andrew Lytle's biography of Forrest by the Nashville-based J.S. Sanders & Co. publishers.

But there are those who wish his name never to be spoken, except in execration. Nathan Bedford Forrest was a hard man: a trader in cotton, livestock, and black persons. He was a ruthless general whose creed was "war means fighting, and fighting means killing." And when the war ended, he became Grand Wizard of the Invisible Empire: the leader of the Tennessee-born Ku Klux Klan. (In 1870 he disbanded his portion of the group.)

Jack Kershaw has known pariahs. In the mid-1970s he represented James Earl Ray,

TEACHERS' UNIONS GUARD EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

The teachers' union contract covering the Waterbury, Connecticut public schools includes this provision (quoted verbatim, including punctuation):

"Teacher shall make two (2) comments per student per subject, per report card, per marking period. One (1) of those comments may be 'no comment,' if a second comment concerning the student in the opinion of the teacher, is inappropriate."

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whom he calls "a dupe, a set-up, a patsy." Yet Kershaw is a personable man who set aside a Joan of Arc sculpture when Forrest became his magnificent obsession.

Kershaw lives in a circa 1910 converted golf-course clubhouse. Its walls are covered by his renderings of nudes, religious imagery, and phantasmagoric visions of evil spirits descending upon the South—for instance, "The Burning of Columbia, South Carolina," in which Lincoln and Sherman hover above the destruction like incubi.

Before a hearthfire only slightly less intense than that which torched Columbia, Kershaw explains himself. Forrest was "a true chivalric hero," he says, "and at the same time he was an innovator: a bridge between the romantic concept of war and brutal, total war."

The Forrest statue, made of fiberglass and polyester over a core of polyurethane foam, is "warlike," says Kershaw. It conveys "an attitude not always found in leaders. He is crying, 'Follow me!' not, 'Boys, go get 'em. I'll wait here under the shade tree.'"

Does Forrest's Klan connection bother Kershaw? "Responsible citizens—landowners, judges, doctors, lawyers—were members. When Forrest perceived that the Klan was being used by thugs—it was so handy to throw a sheet over your head and rob—he disbanded the Klan. That was a great sense of responsibility on Forrest's part, but he's never given credit for that."

The statue, he says, will be unveiled "on a warm day in May" by the sponsoring organization, the League of the South. Racist organizations will be barred from the ceremony. "The modern-day Klan is absolutely antithetical to the original Klan," says Kershaw.

Once installed, General Forrest is likely to draw fire (not for the first time). Yet *TAE* discovered on our way to an interview with the governor that there sits a bust of Forrest just outside the chamber of the Tennessee House of Representatives, causing no apparent harm to that august body. Come that "warm day in May" a confrontation is not unthinkable, but Kershaw insists "it's on private property, and there's not a thing they can do about it."

CHEMOTHERAPY

After rock singer Michael Hutchence died in a drug-related incident in December, one of the members of his band commented:

"It's a sickness.... It's a disease, just like you don't hold someone responsible for dying of cancer. That's the way I see it."

NASHVILLE INVADED BY OILERS AND OTHER PREDATORS

Nashville finally has joined the major leagues. Whether the honor is worth the cost is another matter.

In 1995, Bud Adams, owner of the National Football League's Houston Oilers, announced his intention to move the team to Nashville. This was a real feather in Mayor Phil Bredesen's cap. As the mayor later said, "What I told Nashville is, 'You can do whatever you want. You want an NFL team? You can have one.' Getting a pro sports team has given people a whole new sense of themselves"—not to mention a whole new hole in the wallet.

The key to luring the Oilers was the construction of a $292 million stadium on the east bank of the Cumberland River. Opponents—described by former *Tennessean* editor John Seigenthaler as "community groups, neighborhood groups, and old people who were just pissed off"—forced a referendum. In May 1996, Nashville voters approved the deal by a wide margin.

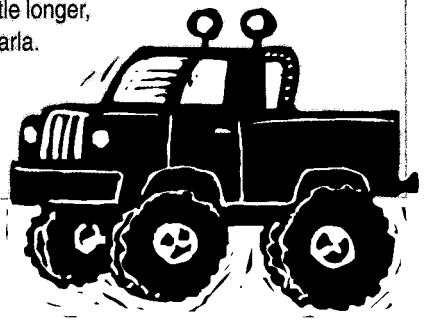
The bulk of the funding for the 65,000-seat stadium ($154 million) will come from local government. The state will provide another $67 million, primarily via bonds, with the remainder coming from the sales of suites and permanent seat licenses.

Until the stadium is ready for play in 1999, the Oilers are playing "home" games in Memphis, making them the only team in the NFL that flies to its home games on Sunday mornings. Nashville fans aren't making the three-hour drive, and the good people of Memphis, spurned by the NFL for years as they begged for a team of their own, are staying away in droves. The Oilers averaged a pathetic 27,965 fans for their eight home games in 1997.

THINGS YOU WON'T HEAR A SOUTHERNER SAY

In honor of our Nashville sojourn, here is a little bit of cultural guidance from Nashville resident Bill English.

- We don't keep firearms in this house.
- Has anybody seen the sideburn trimmer?
- You can't feed that to the dog.
- I thought Graceland was tacky.
- No kids in the back of the pick-up; it's not safe.
- What's a Moon Pie, anyhow?
- Honey, did you mail that donation to Greenpeace?
- We're vegetarians.
- Do you think my hair is too big?
- I'll have grapefruit instead of biscuits and gravy.
- Honey, these bonsai trees need watering?
- Who's Richard Petty?
- Deer heads detract from the decor.
- The tires on that truck are too big.
- Unsweetened tea tastes better.
- Would you like your fish poached or broiled?
- She's too old to be wearing that bikini.
- I don't have a favorite college team.
- I believe you cooked those green beans too long.
- Those shorts ought to be a little longer, Darla.



In seven days, the *TAE* staff saw not a single Oilers' cap perched atop a Nashville head. "The Oilers' marketing program has been tragic," says Seigenthaler. Adams has refused to change the name to something more redolent of Tennessee. The star player, running back and former Heisman Trophy winner Eddie George, ticked off Tennesseans when he revealed that he'd cast his Heisman ballot for Charles Woodson and not Volunteer idol Peyton Manning.

The Oilers "are not a part of the city's psyche yet," says Bruce Dobie, editor of the *Nashville Scene*. Come 1999, though,

continued on page 16

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HOLLYWOOD REPORT

GETTING RELIGION WITH ROBERT DUVALL

the end of his presidency's sharpest week of crisis, Bill Clinton's choice in films seemed ironic. On Friday, January 23, close friends joined the Clintons in the East Wing's family theater for *Titanic.* At that moment, just three days into the Monica Lewinsky scandal, it seemed quite possible that Clinton's tenure in the Oval Office would meet its end faster—and more dramatically—than the great ship itself.

Then on Saturday night, actor Robert Duvall came to the White House at the invitation of the First Family to screen his new film, *The Apostle.* In it, Duvall portrays a Louisiana Pentecostal preacher who struggles with adultery and other sins. Even though Duvall's character prays to God for forgiveness after separating from his wife and fatally assaulting her boyfriend, he is nevertheless, at the end of the picture, led away from his small Louisiana church in handcuffs to answer before the bar of justice for his crime.

The Apostle, brought to Clinton's attention by "Friends of Bill" at Universal Studios, was a curious choice for the President to watch, not only because of its excruciating treatment of adultery ("I am chagrined in my sin, and feel as if I have crucified Christ afresh in what I have done," begins one of the prayers in the film) but because it is perhaps the first mainstream picture that sympathetically—and realistically—portrays a group that the President's allies, especially those in Hollywood, have often treated harshly: evangelical Christians.

For Duvall, 67, *The Apostle* is a work of the heart. In addition to starring in the film, he wrote, directed, and produced it. He did so, he told TAE, after struggling for more than a decade to sell Hollywood producers on the project. When none were interested, he eventually decided to take almost $5 million out of his own savings to finance the production, and recruited friends such as Billy Bob Thornton and June Carter Cash for the cast.

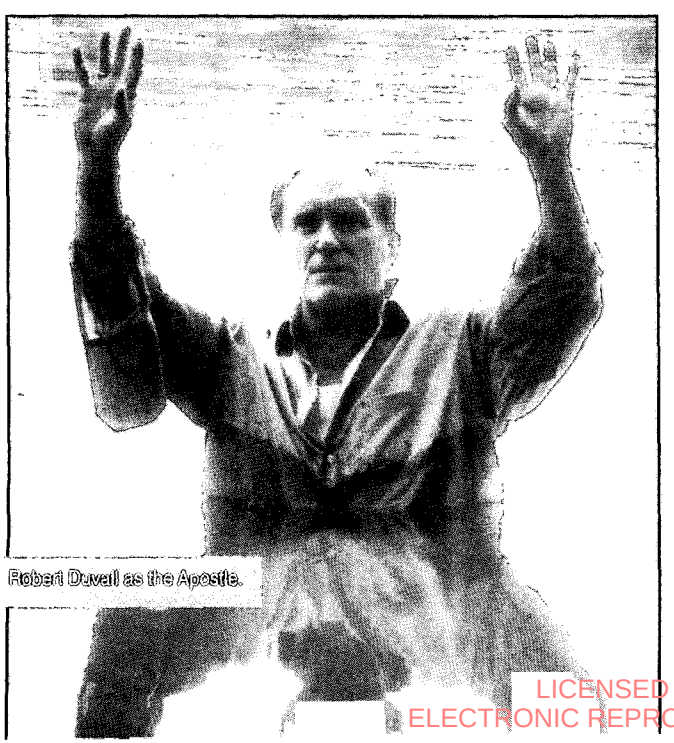

photo credit: Van Redin ©1997

Robert Duvall as the Apostle.

The notion of playing a Southern minister first came to Duvall 13 years ago, oddly enough while attending an Arkansas church where, he says, Clinton's mother was a member. What appealed to him was the possibility of breaking the traditional Hollywood mold (infamously executed in the 1960 film version of Sinclair Lewis' novel *Elmer Gantry*) of portraying Southern preachers as fakes and frauds, and religious people as either stupid or evil—or both. One of the only previous movies to be fair to Southern religion, Duvall notes, was John Huston's 1979 version of Flannery O'Connor's novel *Wise Blood.* "I think Ned Beatty did a wonderful job in that as a street-corner preacher in a cameo. That's the only time I think I've seen it done well."

The honesty and realism with which Duvall has portrayed the Pentecostal culture—especially in deeply affecting and powerful conversion scenes—is proof that spirituality can be accurately captured on film. That Duvall, who often began the day by reading scriptures to the production crew, found himself moved by the power of the material didn't hurt. He has spoken of the effect of gospel music, used throughout the picture, and how it has swept him with emotion. It comes through on screen: "I'm a genuine Holy Ghost Jesus-filled preaching machine here this morning!" says Duvall's character, Sonny, who after confessing his sins is known as the Apostle E.F.

Why do movies typically treat religion and religious believers in such crude and negative stereotypes? "That's the easy way out," Duvall told me just before his White House visit. "It's harder to do it the other way unless you really do some homework and get into it." And Duvall—perhaps best-known for his roles in *The Godfather, Tender Mercies, Apocalypse Now,* and *Lonesome Dove* —did just that. He traveled the South, visiting white and black congregations, and meeting with preachers. His research even took him to Harlem. "I remember going to six churches in one morning there. The last one I visited was an Eastern Coptic Pentecostal Church. Figure that one out," he laughs. "They had all the incense and other trappings, yet a Pentecostal style of cadence."

Duvall, whose father was a rear admiral, grew up on Navy bases and now lives about an hour outside Washington in rural Virginia. He says he believes Hollywood's generally unfriendly treatment of religion stems less from any particular vendetta than from ignorance. Filmmakers and producers, he notes, generally have no idea how important a role spirituality plays in the life of most Americans. (There are approximately 20 million Pentecostals in the U.S., Duvall points out.)

Judging from the powerful reaction of moviegoers—including the Clintons, who Duvall said were "holding hands and moving their feet in rhythm with the music"—*The Apostle* just might break down some of the entertainment-industry prejudice against religion, becoming a catalyst for more realistic depictions of religious life in the future.

*—**John Meroney** is a Washington, D.C. writer.*
With this installment we kick off a regular TAE feature on movies, television, and music to be written by him.

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the new stadium will probably be filled. The fate of Nashville's other major-league team is more problematic.

The National Hockey League, as part of its shift from Canadian burgs (or is that 'bergs?) to Sunbelt metropoli (where most residents previously thought "puck" to be the last name of a trendy chef), has awarded Nashville a conditional franchise that may begin play in the fall of 1998.

The team—the Predators—will play in the Nashville Arena, the new taxpayer-financed $120 million downtown facility. To win final approval for their franchise, the Predators have been told they must sell 12,000 season tickets by March 31, 1998. But not to worry: even if the target is unmet, NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman (a Disney alum) is determined to create a southern market for his league; so the city is unlikely to lose the team.

"People would have preferred basketball," Mayor Bredesen told *TAE*, "and I couldn't pull that off." Meanwhile, a Predators staffer says that much of her time is spent "educating [Nashvillians] on what hockey is."

VISITING MR. WINFREY

Everyone calls her "Oprah." In the barber chair, you call her father "Mr. Winfrey." In nearly 34 years at his East Nashville barber shop, Vernon Winfrey has cut three generations of Nashvillians' hair—a trade he first learned as a teenage boy in rural Mississippi.

As the latest customers enter on a chilly Tuesday afternoon, Winfrey greets each with a hearty "Hello, brother" and a clasped handshake. Then they settle into a row of wooden seats that, like many of the shop accoutrements, date to the store's opening 50 years ago in a then-white neighborhood.

As customers wait patiently, the "Montel" show blares from a TV mounted on the rear wall. The barber shop is a bit decrepit, white foam pokes out from one chair, an unused shoe shine stand is nestled in one corner. As Winfrey cuts the hair of Ensign Johnson—a 1983 Fisk University graduate who first went to him as a young boy—the phone rings. Another barber, a huge guy named Major Perkins who looks like he hasn't read Oprah's diet book, answers the phone. "It's for you, Mr. Winfrey," he says.

With an electric razor in one hand and the phone in the other, Winfrey continues his work in the cramped area amidst the three barber seats. A dapper man who always wears a tie under his white barber jacket, he is unfailingly courteous even as he fields a steady stream of phone calls (many from people who want money or access to Oprah).

Sometimes visitors can't believe that he's really Oprah's father. They say, "Looks like you should have a bigger barber shop." But he reminds them "this shop sent Oprah through school."

When it's time for a customer to take his place in Winfrey's lime green chair, he is beckoned with a nod. His daughter may be the queen of gab, but Vernon Winfrey is decidedly reserved, a man of few words.

At 65 and "raring to go. Raring to go home and go to sleep," Winfrey still has the erect posture of the soldier he was more than 40 years ago. His reticence bespeaks another era: pre-Oprah, indeed pre-'60s, when people didn't wear their emotions on their sleeves.

Born in 1932, Winfrey came to Nashville in 1955 after he was discharged from the Army. He took two jobs—as a Vanderbilt University janitor and a city hospital pot washer for 75 cents per hour.

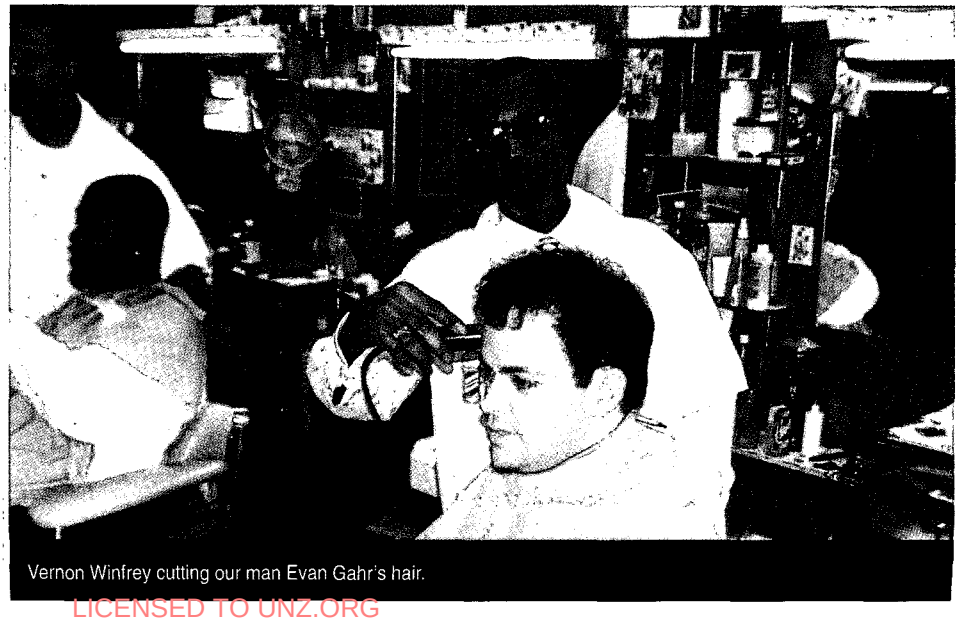
In 1964 Winfrey went to work at the barber shop. He later bought the shop, as well as a nearby grocery store. Winfrey also served as a deacon at the Faith University Church and was a city councilman, representing a mostly black East Nashville district for four terms. In many ways, Winfrey's is a classic American success story. The only thing unique is his world-famous daughter. And as Oprah readily acknowledges, she owes her success to him.

Conceived in a one-time fling between 20-year-old Vernon Winfrey and a 14-year-old girl in Kosciusko, Mississippi, Oprah, now 44, lived with her maternal grandmother until age six. Then she went to Milwaukee to live with her mother. It was an unhappy time. She was sexually abused and sexually wild. At age 14, she was sent to live with her father and his wife, Zelma.

Winfrey quickly set his daughter straight. Perhaps his outlook is best described by a sign he kept in his barber shop in the '60s: "*Attention Teenagers: If you are tired of being hassled by unreasonable parents, now is the time for action. Leave home and pay your own way while you still know everything.*"

A strict disciplinarian, Winfrey forced his daughter to read five books every two weeks. Out went the short skirts she favored; Winfrey warned her to act dignified with men.

After graduating from high school she entered Tennessee State University in Nashville, working her way through school as a reporter and anchor at the local CBS affiliate. In 1976, she went to Baltimore to host a morning talk show and later moved to Chicago to host what



Vernon Winfrey cutting our man Evan Gahr's hair.

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would become "The Oprah Winfrey Show." The show was nationally syndicated in 1986, and today Oprah is reportedly worth more than $400 million.

In his shop, Winfrey has a chance to affect lives. Major Perkins, the young assistant barber who just started working at the store, sees the opportunity as a Godsend. A recovered drug addict who now works nights as a drug counselor, Perkins says that at the shop he just left there was "everything you could think of going on—strippers, drugs, you name it."

In a neighborhood that is riddled with drug dealers and has seen the barber shop down the street broken into numerous times, Major says that Winfrey's shop has remained untouched because he commands respect even among low-lifes.

If the barber shop is a refuge, it's not a sanctuary. As Perkins talks, a young boy's hair is cut in the adjacent chair. His father, a policeman, comes in and keeps a watchful eye on his son. Like many parents in the shop, the police officer, whose own father was a public school principal, sends his son to Catholic school because the public schools are unsafe.

"I've cut three generations of hair. I'm not sure about the fourth," Winfrey says. But if he does service a fourth, its members will undoubtedly call him Mr. Winfrey—even as the shop's television drones with questions for Oprah.

—Evan Gahr is a frequent contributor to The American Enterprise.

NASHVILLE vs. L.A.—A PERSONAL VIEW

About 23 years ago, Hollywood director Robert Altman made a film encouraging other Americans to laugh at the city of Nashville, country music, and the traditional values many local citizens espouse. Today, Nashville is having the last laugh. The city and its surrounding area are thriving.

I think I know why this is happening: Americans are tired of fractured families and communities. They are weary of taxes and labor unions. They want to live in a place where private economic activity can flourish, and where people help each other rather than relying on government.

I lived just outside of Nashville before moving to Los Angeles nearly a decade ago, and I went back to visit last year. I was amazed by the growth. It seemed like Nashville was on the verge of becoming a mini-L.A. But then I realized that when it comes to politics, culture, and business, the Nashville climate is the opposite of what one finds in L.A.

In Los Angeles, the city council and county commissioners are constantly trying to find new ways to tax businesses and citizens. Does your plane want to land at LAX? You won't believe the stiff airport landing fees. Do you want to try writing the great American novel or screenplay? If you work on it at your kitchen table the city council will require you to pay a home-based-business tax, whether you're able to sell the manuscript or not. If, however, you want to open a strip club, go on welfare, or collect benefits for your unmarried partner, L.A.'s a great place to be.

No wonder lots of regular people want to move to Nashville. The climate for business and living is very friendly. Tennessee has no state income tax, is a right-to-work state, and has plenty of jobs for anyone who wants one. Local and state taxes on a family of four with an annual income of $50,000 are $2,486 annually in Nashville, compared to $3,942 in L.A. The median price of Nashville homes sold in late 1997 was a moderate $124,000.

Here's a more intangible example of the differences in these two entertainment capitals. I was recently helping a friend move cross-country to Nashville. We loaded his belongings in a trailer and were one day outside his destination when the trailer caught fire. This man and his family lost most of their belongings.

We were able to get back on the road and reach Nashville minus the trailer. When we arrived at the house of a musician friend of mine, he and people from his church were having a potluck dinner. Hearing our story, they immediately opened up their checkbooks and began donating to my friend. On Sunday, he spoke at a church where he was a total stranger, and people gave him an additional $1,200.

America is hungry for the virtues that produce this type of kindness. The contemporary gospel music industry, after starting in Los Angeles, has moved to Nashville, in large part because the whole atmosphere is just better for raising children. For the same reason, lots of other Americans are heading the same way.

—Dave Geisler writes often about the entertainment industry.

WARPED MINDS THINK ALIKE

President Clinton's goatishness hasn't disgusted everyone. Wacko Russian politician Vladimir Zhirinovsky is positively admiring:

Zhirinovsky to Clinton: Let's Swap Sex Tales

MOSCOW, Jan. 23 (Reuters)—Bill Clinton, fighting to shake off sex scandal charges, can look forward to swapping tales with flamboyant Russian nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky if he loses his job.

"If there is an impeachment, Bill will have more freedom, and I will be able to meet him more often. We will play golf together, I also like dogs. We will together recall our sexual experiences—he will not be alone," Zhirinovsky told Reuters. Zhirinovsky, who once said he was ready for "group sex" with Russia's voters, spends a lot of time railing against the evils of the United States. But on Friday he was in an indulgent mood.

"I always liked Bill," said Zhirinovsky, who, like Clinton, is 51.

PANDERER IN CHIEF

From a November 8 speech by Bill Clinton to a gay rights group:
"Since I became President, we're spending ten times as much per fatality on people with AIDS as people with breast cancer or prostate cancer."

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"Live" with TAE

SOME OF NASHVILLE'S NEW STARS, OLD STARS, AND BUSINESS TITANS TALK ABOUT THE EVOLUTION OF THEIR MUSIC—BEFORE IT BECAME COOL, AND SINCE.

Twang-Town Headliners Mull Country Music in the '90s

Country music is big business. Each week, more than 45 million Americans listen to country radio stations, an audience that outnumbers the second-rated radio format by 7 million people. There are more country stations—2,505—than any other format. Garth Brooks is now the most successful solo recording artist of all time, bigger than rock-and-roll stars like Elvis, Michael Jackson, and Elton John. Country star Shania Twain is one of only four female artists whose sales for a single album exceed 10 million copies.

Nashville is the unchallenged home of this industry. Recently, TAE *contributor John Meroney spoke with a variety of leading figures in this entertainment capital. What follows is a composite of responses from six of the more colorful and influential characters in country music today:* ***Trace Adkins****, a relatively new artist now on his second album (*Big Time*), whose work harkens back to Merle Haggard and Johnny Cash;* ***Bill Anderson****, Grand Ole Opry member who as a singer and songwriter—"Still," "City Lights," and "Mama Sang a Song"—has produced some of the top country songs of the last three decades;* ***Eddy Arnold****, a certified country music legend and, until Garth Brooks, the biggest-selling country artist of all time;* ***Gary Chapman****, gospel music producer, singer, and songwriter, host of* TNN*'s "Prime Time Country," and husband of Amy Grant;* ***Harlan Howard****, the acclaimed songwriter behind "I Fall to Pieces," "Heartaches by the Number," and dozens of other hits; and* ***J. Patrick Quigley****, the new* CEO *of Capitol/Nashville (home to Brooks, Adkins, and other artists) and a force behind the shift away from country music's traditional sounds and themes.*

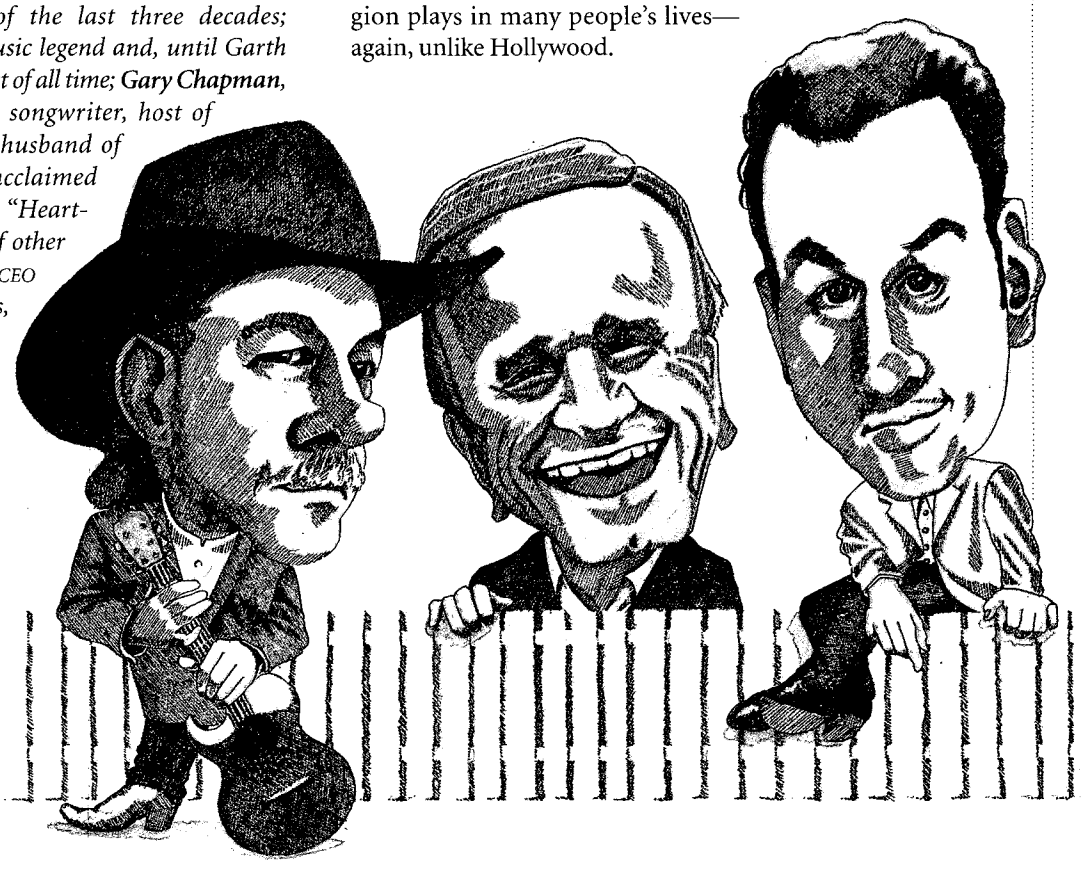
TAE: Why is Nashville, unlike the other entertainment capitals of Hollywood and New York, culturally and politically conservative?

TRACE ADKINS: Because it's the South. I think this area of the country breeds conservatism. That's just how the people were raised around here. Their values and sense of right and wrong are instilled at a very early age. But there are a lot of liberals in the music business, I'll guarantee you that. I run into them everyday and most of them are very vocal and outspoken because they know I'm vocal and outspoken as a conservative—and they like to rub it in a little bit.

BILL ANDERSON: There's this expression, "Nashville is the buckle of the Bible belt," and that, too, probably has something to do with it.

HARLAN HOWARD: Nashville is conservative, and I like living in a town that's that way. It's very tough to raise taxes in Nashville. I'm from Detroit, but I've been here 37 years so I kind of feel like a Tennessean. If you live here for a year, you'd really absorb it. But Tennessee was never as Southern as Mississippi, Georgia, and Alabama. In the '60s, Vanderbilt was the first school in the Southeastern conference to sign a black athlete, Perry Wallace, as a basketball player. That caused shock waves. Before him, blacks didn't get to play in these wonderful universities. So things have changed.

TAE: Nashville also seems to celebrate the vibrant role that religion plays in many people's lives—again, unlike Hollywood.



TRACE ADKINS EDDY ARNOLD GARY CHAPMAN

Illustration by Lucinda S. Lewine

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GARY CHAPMAN: Oh, my, yes. For about four years, I've been doing a show down at the old Ryman Auditorium called "Sam's Place" which is an attempt to reflect the diversity of the music that's here and the spirituality behind it. Most of the artists are believers. They grew up in church and hold to the values and truth they found there, and they live their lives that way. People are seekers, and if you look long enough, you'll find the truth. Nashville is all over Robert Duvall's new film *The Apostle.* Wynonna Judd and I did a duet on the soundtrack. Patty Loveless did a song. Steven Curtis Chapman did a tune. Emmylou Harris did a duet with Robert Duvall. My wife and I watched the film, and it's so powerful. I'm a small-town Texas preacher's kid, and aside from the fact that Duvall's character had a little problem with women, and maybe drank a little too much, he's my dad—an absolute believer who is willing to do literally anything that he thinks God wants him to do.

TAE: So how do you square your Christianity with some of the lyrics in country music—cheating, drinking—things you wouldn't necessarily call family values?

CHAPMAN: There's nothing like a good cheating song to make me want to run home to be with my wife.

TAE: But there is a stereotype about country music, that all the songs are about drinking and cheating and carousing.

ANDERSON: Well, the cheating and the drinking songs have historically been a big part of country music. It's not as much a part of country music today, but one of Garth Brooks' latest singles is called "Longneck Bottle."

Country is just music that's about everyday life.

—Trace Adkins

ADKINS: On both sides of the nation, country music still gets a bad rap as being hokey, ignorant, and hillbilly. I resent that. I think it's some kind of perception that was created a long time ago, but I don't understand it.

TAE: Do you find that bias still exists when you travel to meet with record executives in New York and L.A.?

ADKINS: They probably expect me to be just a dumb old redneck cowboy, but I think after speaking with them for a few minutes, they look at me in a strange way and say, "Oh, no, he's not as stupid as we suspected that he should be." And then things take on a different air and things are at least a little more respectful.

TAE: What's it going to take to get the major media to finally acknowledge the popularity of country music?

PAT QUIGLEY: We need for New York to respect that country music is changing and becoming more progressive and sophisticated, to deal with the lifestyle that people deal with everyday. Then you catch the imagination of the fans in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles who have busy, hectic lives and can come home and say, "I just want to relax. I'll have my glass of Chardonnay and my brie, and I'm going to put on *this* record." Then the *New York Times* covers you. It's not going to create a market for you, it's going to cover a market for you. That market's not going to expand until we get all the record labels to agree to let the music grow, expand, and generate progressive music someplace between Southern rock and Caribbean. I don't care: Keep your family values and important lyrics, but give us a better sound than just the traditional sound you hear in Opry-type music.

TAE: We went to the Grand Ole Opry on Saturday night, and what's played there is quite different from what's heard on most of today's FM country stations.

CHAPMAN: What you heard there was *country* music. It's all very cyclical. When I was growing up, it was really country, then the "Urban Cowboy" craze kind of took it in a more progressive direction. After that, Randy Travis

HARLAN HOWARD J. PATRICK QUIGLEY BILL ANDERSON

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and people of his era ushered in another wave of traditional country. Growth-wise, it's blown up in our faces again, with Garth Brooks, Shania Twain, and all those phenoms. But just watch, it's about to swing back. That's one wonderful thing about country music—it shifts, ebbs, and flows stylistically, unlike pop music. Country music is just country. It's going to shift around a little bit, doing some different instrumentations, different production styles. But it will always come back to what you heard at the Opry. Nobody wants it to change.

ANDERSON: I've heard people call it rock-and-roll with steel guitars and fiddles. Maybe there's some validity to that. They tread very, very lightly on songs about drinking and divorce. I'm not sure that country music is connecting with people emotionally today as well as it did years ago. If 50 percent of the people in the country are getting divorced, who's writing songs for them? It's hard for somebody like that to relate to a positive, up-tempo song.

TAE: Is it really fair to call what's on FM radio "country" music?

EDDY ARNOLD: Well, you can, but it's a different kind, and I can't say I'm sorry because it's been a great boost to the business. Frankly, it's brought a lot of respect to our side. I always wanted us to have the respect of the general public. That's come about probably because of the new people and styles, the black hats and the white hats. I still have my favorites, though. I still like the situation where when you hear a guy hit a note, and you know who it is because he has a distinctive sound. So many of the young fellows—they're very good—but when I hear them, I don't know who they are.

ANDERSON: I think we've lost a lot of our originality and an awful lot of our creativity by often having committees of people at record labels make decisions as we do today. You've got to look right, can't be overweight, and they've got to see you on stage. I think what happens when you do that is you get something that's homogenized. When I started, they'd say, "We've already got one of those. We want somebody who's different." Today if you're too different, they'll pass on you.

TAE: The sound of the music isn't the only thing that's changed. So have the lyrics and themes of the songs. Reba McEntire recorded a highly touted 1994 song about a woman dying of AIDS called "She Thinks His Name Was John." Garth Brooks did a song a few years ago celebrating homosexual rights. "Independence Day," recorded by Martina McBride, is about a battered wife who burns down her house while her husband's in it.

There's nothing like a good cheating song to make me want to run home to be with my wife.

—Gary Chapman

CHAPMAN: A woman scorned is an old theme in country music. I think what's changed are the values from which the music reflects real life.

TAE: But should country music be getting into social and political issues?

ADKINS: Everybody has a cause that they choose to get behind. Some people are just making personal statements. That's up to them. But the country music fans will always be the determining factor in what's good and tasteful and what's not. They'll let you know when you cross the line. I just wrote a song that's about a prostitute who ends up killing herself. A friend of mine said, "Man, you can't record that. It's macabre and dark." But it's everyday life, isn't it? It's real and true, and probably happened somewhere today.

QUIGLEY: We have to make sure we touch everybody's values, and values have changed. Values aren't about the woman who took the horse and put it in the back of the car and drove out of town. Atlanta's the number-one crime city in the U.S. Somebody should be dealing with that in their music. I'm a child of the Vietnam War. I'm a '60s and '70s college kid who was influenced by a lot of people—including the Beatles, who had 12 albums in six years. Yet every album was different. They changed as times changed.

TAE: But these songs are certainly much different from Eddy Arnold classics like "Cattle Call" and "Make the World Go Away."

ARNOLD: Yeah.

TAE: What does it say about the business that country seems to be headed in this direction?

ARNOLD: I can only say this: I would never sing songs like that. It's got to be a love song for me. Beautiful, romantic love songs are the ones that live and live and live. The songs you've just mentioned, I never hear them anymore. You hear "Make the World Go Away." I did that in 1965, and it was a worldwide hit.

TAE: Why are some in Nashville enthusiastic about taking on these topics?

HOWARD: Everybody in prominence who reaches a certain level seem to start feeling like a missionary. Johnny Cash did it, and movie stars do it, too. All of a sudden, you think you're a spokesman for humanity when actually all the hell you are is an entertainer. God says, "The people need entertainment; so I declare you a singer, piano player, movie actor, or novelist." All these people have gifts that they're born with but all of a sudden they start thinking they're the Messiah. I know in my heart that what the world wants from me is love songs. I don't really

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think we should let our egos get so big. I wouldn't write some song about this terrible disease. Instead, do a benefit for AIDS and say, "I'm proud to be here and this is a worthwhile benefit. God bless the afflicted. Now here's a song I had a hit on ten years ago." What the audience came for was entertainment, not a speech, and not a preacher. There's nothing wrong with making people dance, sing, smile, or get a little tear in the corner of their eye. Just don't take it so damn far that you really think you should be over there trying to figure out the Israeli-Palestinian problem, for God's sake.

TAE: But Nashville hasn't traditionally pushed social and political issues in its music the way Hollywood does with TV and movies.

ANDERSON: The difference is that Hollywood often tries to tell us what we ought to think. Country music is more of a mirror of what's going on. I believe "She Thinks His Name Was John" and "We Shall Be Free" were reflecting what's going on in society. There have always been songs like that. I did a song back in 1970, and it was one of those that people either loved or hated. I wrote it with a newspaper columnist. We were standing backstage at a show in Detroit in the late-'60s when everything was in turmoil—they were burning the city and all this kind of stuff. Merle Haggard was on stage singing "Okie from Muskogee," and people were standing up, cheering, and waving flags. The columnist turned to me and he made the comment, "He's a real hero to these people. Where have all our heroes gone?" He was a new father at the time, and he didn't know what to tell his son about people such as Joan Baez and the things that were going on in the news at that time. Later he wrote me a letter with these thoughts, and I just took excerpts from it and made it into a song—"Where Have All Our Heroes Gone?" It wasn't preaching anything, it was just kind of reflecting what was going on and asking a question. I recorded it myself, and it was a number-one record.

TAE: Performing on the "Grand Ole Opry" was once the pinnacle of success in country music. Is it still?

ADKINS: The first time I got to go on the "Grand Ole Opry" was almost a ritual, ceremonial-type feeling because it is an institution. It's been there forever. Simply to stand on the same stage where some of the biggest legends in country music—in music, period—have stood is a very special, magical feeling.

TAE: For you it was extra special because you proposed to your wife there.

ADKINS: I had been thinking of trying to come up with some really cool, romantic way to propose. Being the old hard-shell and sensitive guy who I am, I just couldn't seem to come up with anything. But when they told me that I was going to get an opportunity to play on the "Opry," I thought, Maybe they'll let me do that—that would be pretty cool. So I kept it a secret and was successful. She didn't have a clue. So I called her out on stage, and it was really special.

TAE: That stage has also been a favorite stop for American Presidents.

ANDERSON: The one night that comes to mind was in 1974, during the depths of Watergate, when we opened the new Opry House and President Nixon came. He told Roy Acuff, "You go up to Washington and be the President, and I'll stay down here and pick and sing." [laughs] I remember standing next to Ernest Tubb that night. Ernest had been on the Opry since 1941 and seen it grow in popularity. I turned to Ernest and said, "Did you ever think that you would live to see the day that the President of the United States would be at the Grand Ole Opry?" He thought a minute and said, "No, but I just wish it had been another President." [laughs] Jimmy Carter and George Bush also came to the Opry. I've introduced Senators and Congressman, and it's amazing the people who come backstage. You bring them out and kind of let them say hello to the audience.

TAE: Should country music be loyal to its traditions? The Opry is, after all, the mother church of country music.

QUIGLEY: Do you really get into the Grand Ole Opry and say, "These lyrics, they really hit me"? They don't hit *me*. But I know they hit somebody else. I worked at Rolling Rock beer—I don't drink beer, though. So I think you need a broad spectrum of music. I couldn't market Opry music in New York City. I'm not that smart. But I could market progressive music, and I can market lifestyle music. Get rid of the words "country-western" and say, rather than traditional country, why don't we just call that western music? And call country more of a lifestyle statement. Sting could sing country music, but maybe not western music.

TAE: The newer artists don't seem to have the "Coal Miner's Daughter"-type background anymore. Has that affected the music?

CHAPMAN: Some. But I think there's probably a broader worldview that comes from country music now than maybe there was historically. For every Mary Chapin Carpenter, there's a Sara

continued on page 85

Hollywood often tries to tell us what we ought to think. Country music is more of a mirror of what's going on.

—Bill Anderson

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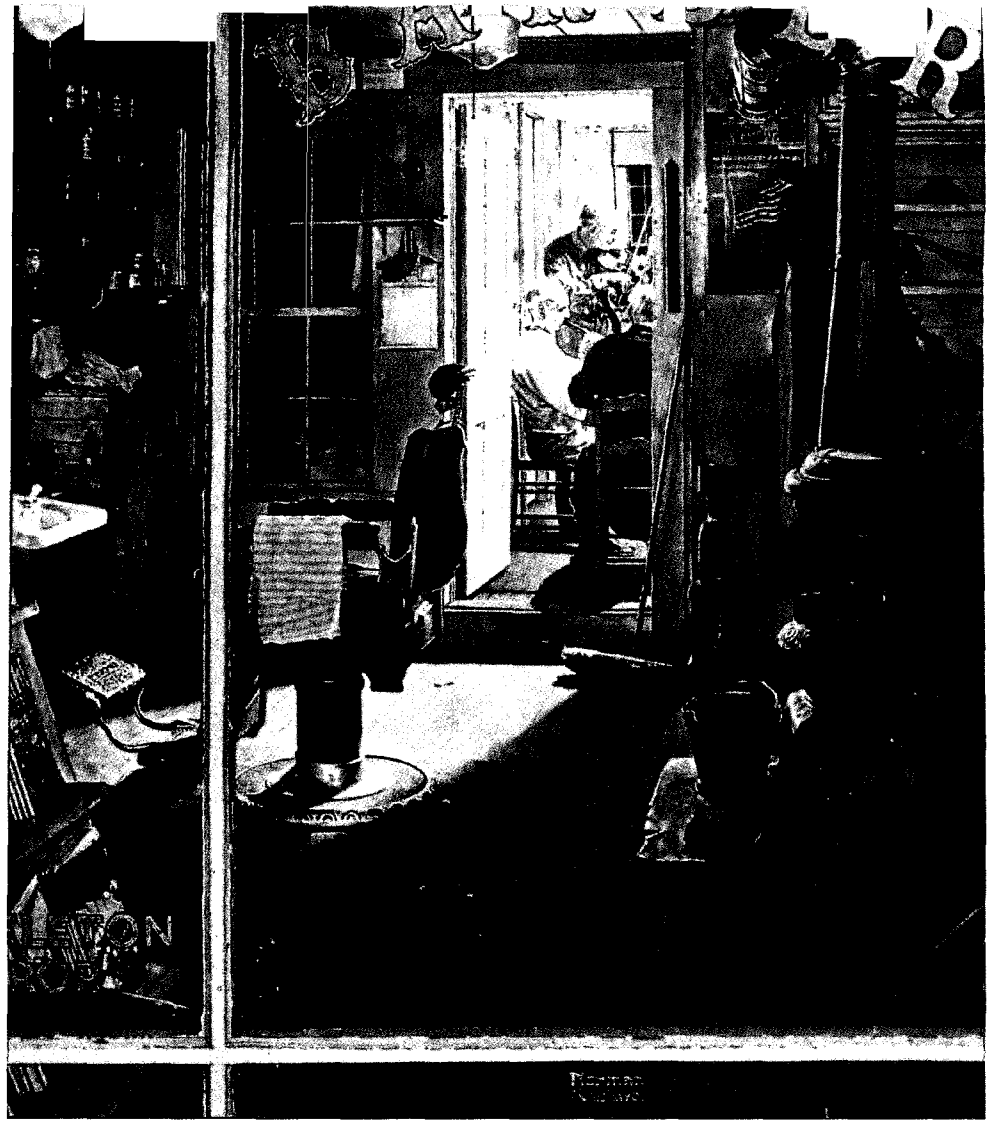

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NORMAN ROCKWELL GREAT AME

Norman Rockwell is the most popular American artist of this century. The themes of his work define a turbulent period that opened with barefoot boys lazing away summer afternoons in the countryside and ended with their sons stepping cautiously onto the surface of the moon. He chronicled our times: the change from parental paddling to Freudian psychology, from sleepy storefronts to offices in mighty skyscrapers, from storybooks to TV sets. He showed his fellow citizens two great world wars, the Cold War, the failures and triumphs of the civil-rights movement. Every major political figure from FDR to the Carters. Movie stars, moms, cute kids, foxy grandpas, and Boy Scouts. New suburbs. Old cities. Small-town places left behind in the march of progress. Ordinary, everyday places beatified by light and by the artist's scrupulous attention to their angles and corners and timeworn surfaces.

Rockwell was born in 1894, the year the *New York World* began printing comic strips in color. He would later go to work for the new mass-market magazines that sold themselves to passing customers through the visual appeal of the color cover. Rockwell would never paint pictures for museums. He was not the classical starving artist in a garret, expressing himself as he wished for the admiration, perhaps, of the enlightened few. He worked instead in a blatantly commercial setting: his subject matter was often dictated and edited by others, and his paintings were only one step in a complicated

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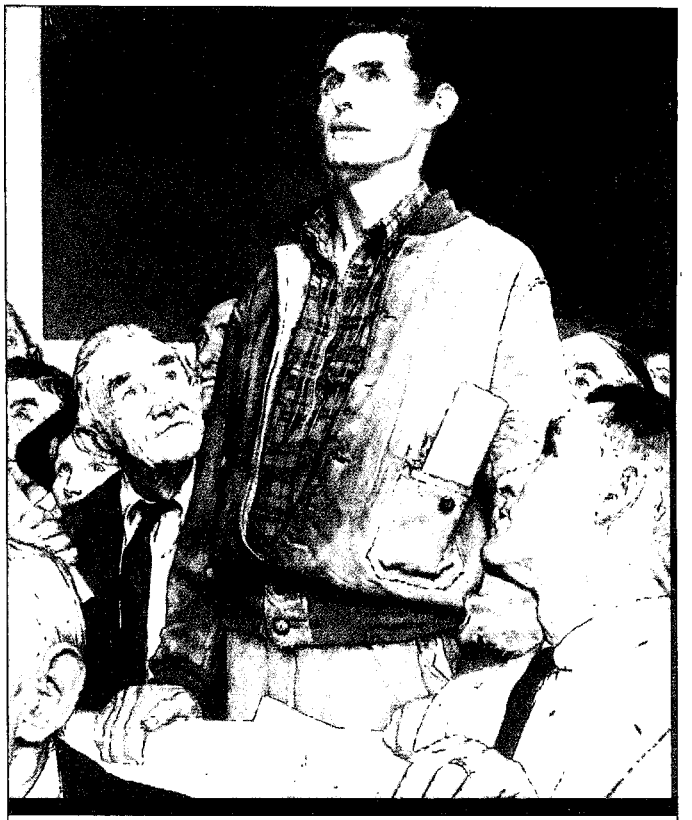
BREAKING HOME TIES—Details tell the story: college pennant, new clothes, bookmarked textbooks, the eager expression on the young man's face as the engine that will whisk him away announces its presence. Lost in their own sadness, the father and the dog ignore the approaching train.



FREEDOM OF SPEECH—The central figure is seen from below, standing out from the crowd. The angle of vision helps to clarify the story. Rockwell, the single eye at the far left, looks on anxiously, as if to gauge the viewer's response to his picture.

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By Karal Ann Marling

RICAN ARTIST?

industrial process that led to a finished ad, an illustration, or a cover.

Norman Rockwell did 324 covers for the *Saturday Evening Post* alone. By conservative estimates, 4 million people saw each *Post* cover as it first appeared. Faithful readers became caught up in a Dickensian serial of American life that began in 1916 with the story of an embarrassed little boy, forced to dress up and walk the baby while his friends played baseball, and petered out in 1962 as a museum guard opened his lunchpail for a midnight snack under the censorious gaze of a stuffed horse that carried a medieval knight in full armor. Following Rockwell's saga, month after month, year after year, his fans saw edited versions of their own lives, rarely marked by dramatic incident or great tragedy, but lives of decency, sweetness, and perseverance. It was a vision of common life, in the heart of this century, as we might wish to have lived it.

Cover art was throwaway stuff, of course—yesterday's trash, like most other consumer products. It was popular art that pandered to the masses with sentimental boy-and-his-dog themes and a style premised on painstaking verisimilitude. The man in the street had a hankering for anecdote and affirmation, nostalgia and myth: true connoisseurship in this corner of the marketplace meant

Karal Ann Marling, one of America's leading art historians, is author of the new book Norman Rockwell, *published by Harry N. Abrams, in association with the National Museum of American Art.*

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THANKSGIVING (SAYING GRACE)—Although the interior details are endlessly engaging, it's the activity outside the window on a foggy day that gives this picture its curious push-pull.

THANKSGIVING: MOTHER AND SON PEELING POTATOES—This scene commemorated the final Thanksgiving of the war. Dinner has been all but forgotten as the mother gazes at her son with love.

© The Curtis Publishing Company/Thanksgiving 11/24/45; Saying Grace 11/24/51

ALTHOUGH DESPISED BY THE CRITICAL ESTABLISHMENT, NORMAN ROCKWELL FITS READILY INTO THE GRAND CONTINUUM OF REALIST MASTERS.

chuckling over cunning details missed on first inspection (like the bandage almost always wrapped around the toe of the barefoot kid). So Rockwell never commanded much respect in the realm of high art. He was a journalist, doling out information in pictorial form. Or an entertainer, a raconteur. A craftsman, a maker of Christmas cards and Valentines. But not an artist. Not really. During his lifetime, there were only a handful of museum exhibitions of his work, despite rising auction prices and a mounting demand for old Rockwell covers, reproductions, prints, and collectibles. Nobody wrote about him, either, except as an example of bad taste—the Lawrence Welk of American art—or as an American character, a sort of stereotype: the skinny New Englander with a pipe who seemed to have stepped out of a picture by Norman Rockwell.

When Rockwell died in 1978, his eulogists included art critics who had clearly been assigned to the story against their wills. John Russell, writing for the *New York Times,* called him an "amiable anachronism." Rockwell "will not live in the history of art," Russell concluded, "but as a witness to a certain view of America…he was the right man in the right place at the right time." Robert Hughes of *Time* dubbed the deceased "the Rembrandt of Punkin Crick." He was a picture-maker, Hughes argued, who supplied pre-electronic America with an endless store of images framed in the "depthless narrative clarity" of the TV set. He painted "visual bromides," said *Newsweek.*

Editors who mourned Norman Rockwell—editors of the low-brow journals for which he once worked—steered clear of the experts. Instead, they asked celebrities to comment on his passing, reasoning that movie stars and politicians were amateurs, just like the average reader. And it came as no surprise at all that John Wayne and Ronald Reagan, Doris Day, Mary Tyler Moore, and Lucille Ball all loved Norman Rockwell. They cited favorite pictures with an ease bred of long familiarity. Everybody knew the one with the cop and the runaway kid. The little girl with the black eye. The father saying goodbye to his college-bound son at the depot. The old lady and her grandson saying grace in a grubby trackside diner. Recollected with genuine pleasure, Rockwell's pictures were an in-

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THE MARRIAGE LICENSE—Often, the intensity of Rockwell's gaze renders the ostensible subject of a picture invisible. The textures of the desk, books, and brick wall framed in the window amount to a still life so intense as to muffle the story line.

HOMECOMING MARINE (THE WAR HERO)—Each object is solemnized by the artist's meticulous attention to it. This is home—at last. The veteran's war story is quiet as a prayer, and the gravity of the occasion is mirrored in the still, sorrowful faces of his listeners.

© The Curtis Publishing Company/Homecoming Marine 10/13/45; Marriage License 6/11/55

TO HOLD ROCKWELL TO STANDARDS SET BY THE AVANT-GARDE IS, IN THE END, TO DENY THAT THERE IS ART BEYOND THE MARGINS OF MODERNISM.

timate part of other people's lives, as precious to them as their own memories.

In recent years, the art world has not changed its collective mind about Rockwell: he is still a nonperson. In the public domain, however, Rockwell has taken on a distinctly conservative coloration. Ronald Reagan, while still in the White House, pronounced him "wonderful" and agreed to chair a fund-raising drive for the new Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Ross Perot often poses for the camera in front of his Rockwells, as if to connect his biography and political values to their content. There is Rockwell the mythmaker, too, from whose pictures filmmaker Steven Spielberg (another Rockwell Museum supporter) derived the old-fashioned, apple-pie, front-porch Americana of movies like *E.T.* and *Jaws:* it is the snug rightness of the Norman Rockwell settings that makes the incursion of Spielberg's alien forces so terrifying. Rockwell, in the 1990s, stands for something timeless and true, but something always on the verge of destruction—a vision of America that becomes harder and harder to reconcile with rampant crime, urban chaos, and the impersonal age of the computer. To cherish Rockwell can be an act of defiance, a willful retreat into nostalgia and should-have-beens.

Gradually, however, and from other quarters, a new understanding of Rockwell has begun to emerge, innocent of both ideology and futile regret. Novelist John Updike, in an important 1990 essay, confessed to looking daily for years at Rockwell's *Shuffleton's Barbershop,* a 1950 *Post* cover mounted over the toilet in his office. What he discovered was that there was always something else to notice in the picture, an "avid particularizing," a plenitude, a generosity of vision that intensified the experience of place. Rockwell, he wrote, consistently provided "a little more than the occasion strictly demanded."

In *Shuffleton's Barbershop*, Rockwell's masterpiece, the artist looks through a window into a darkened interior, and beyond that, into a luminous back room, where the old musicians play in the after-hours quiet. This is the sort of convoluted conceit that was a specialty of the American genre painter William Sidney Mount in the nineteenth century: a subject that must contrive to

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THE PROBLEM WE ALL LIVE WITH—The little girl is Ruby Bridges, who integrated an elementary school in New Orleans in 1960 in the face of threats. In Rockwell's color study for the painting, Ruby walked just ahead of the trailing guards; in this painting, the child's fear is harder to bear because she moves closer to the lead guards for protection.

Photo courtesy of The Norman Rockwell Museum at Stockbridge
Painting by NORMAN ROCKWELL. Use authorized by The Norman Rockwell Estate Licensing Company.

evoke what the ear hears through what the eye sees. The spiritual focus is far away, in deep space.

The painting is a spatial puzzle made up entirely of rectangles. Some are transparent, like Shuffleton's front window, bearing his name and Rockwell's, or the second darkened window in the middle distance, which reflects back phantom objects, nowhere seen inside the shop. Some rectangles are placed at an oblique angle to the plate glass, like the comic books, and the footrest of the barber chair. Some are voids, openings: the door into the back room and a second door, inside, into another lighted chamber.

Suddenly, everything has its double, its doppelganger. Two open doors. The back window of the shop. The back window of the back room. What's there is really here, and vice versa. Reality slips sideways a notch, disclosing art. *Trompe l'oeil*: the eye is truly fooled. The act of seeing creates a secret space, unknowable for all its banality.

Other Rockwell paintings rise to the same level. His wartime work *Homecoming Marine (The War Hero)*, painted in 1945, is a fine example. There is no cheap heroism in this picture. The boy's weariness and distress register on the faces of his listeners, from the slender blond child to the stocky old man. The infinite tenderness of their response is conveyed less by facial expressions than by the pains Rockwell takes to delineate every bottle and scale, every light bulb and cable and vise. Every item gets its due, in a gesture of respect that makes the garage into a sacred space—Socrates' Academy, or the temple where young Jesus discoursed with the elders.

Although despised by the critical establishment, Norman Rockwell's obsessive perfectionism had crossed the line from mere commercial work to an art for art's sake perilously close to high art. There is more here than poignant yesterdays in small-town America. The barbershop and garage scenes are powerful paintings. William Sidney Mount + Mark Rothko = Norman Rockwell.

To hold Rockwell to standards set by the avant-garde is, in the end, to deny the possibility that there is art beyond the margins of modernism. Dave Hickey, in a provocative 1995 *Art Issues* study, observes that Willem de Kooning and Andy Warhol both loved Rockwell's work. Yet he judges Rockwell according to a different yardstick, a measure of memory calibrated to his own recollections in which particularity, sentiment, and desire all matter. "Rockwell taught me how to remember," he confesses. "I clung to the ordinary eccentricity, the clothes, the good-heartedness, the names of things, the comic incongruities, and the oddities of arrangement and light"—and so did Rockwell. Because Norman Rockwell's pictures lived in this world of ordinary things, amid a million other things, they had to select and define, as memory does. They had to accept and cherish. They affirmed precisely what modernism programmatically questions and rejects.

Rockwell's is not a perfect world, Hickey notes. Little girls have fights at school. Bankers are puzzled by Jackson Pollock paintings. Salesmen struggle with expense accounts and languish in lonely hotel rooms. But life goes on, in the subtle self-contained rhythms of the compositions. Shoes echo the shapes of lamps. The printed fabric of a slipcover tells a story of its own. And, because these things have been chosen, examined, ordered, and well remembered, we seem to remember them, too. Life goes on and Norman Rockwell is a part of it.

In 1970, when I was in the middle of a doctoral program in art history, my grandmother gave me Thomas S. Buechner's *Norman Rockwell, Artist and Illustrator* for Christmas. There was not much discussion in the book of Rockwell's merit as an artist. In the pages of *Life*, under the headline, "If we all like it, is it art?" Buechner himself conceded that his volume was meant for the faithful who didn't care what the art world thought. But there I was, suddenly confronted with the sheer pleasure of looking at Norman Rockwell again.

When I was a little girl I used to make long Sunday afternoon visits to my grandmother, where we often sat side by side on her living room sofa and looked at the pictures in that week's crop of magazines together. *Life. Look. McCall's. Good Housekeeping.* The *Saturday Evening Post.* John Falter, Mead Schaeffer, Al Parker, Jon Whitcomb. And Norman Rockwell. The great big Christmas book made me remember those Sundays and those pictures. But the fledgling art historian in me had to wonder if the pictures, the memories, and the joy of looking could possibly be legitimate. "If we all like it, is it art?"

Twenty-five years later, that question is all but moot. Today, Rockwell fits readily into the grand continuum of realist masters that stretches from Thomas Eakins to Richard Estes. Memory and pleasure, stories and feelings, things and their peculiar auras have all found their places in a postmodern aesthetic more voracious and forgiving than the modernist orthodoxy of Buechner's time. Today, I can say that Norman Rockwell is the most popular American artist of this century—an artist, that is: a *real* artist. A great artist.

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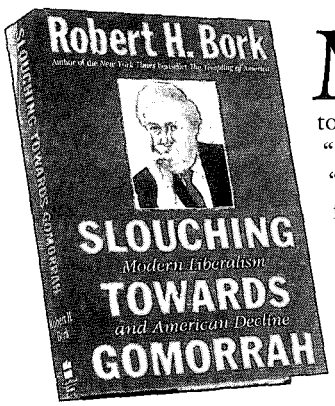
Liberals once told ugly lies about Robert Bork. Now, he tells the ugly *truth* about liberalism.



Moments after Robert Bork's 1987 Supreme Court nomination, Ted Kennedy unleashed a torrent of invective on the Senate floor. "Robert Bork's America," he bellowed, "is a land in which women would be forced into back-alley abortions, blacks would sit at segregated lunch counters, rogue police could break down citizens' doors in midnight raids...." and so, shamelessly, on. The America of Kennedy's description was almost as frightening as it was preposterous. But the America that he and his fellow liberals were then busy creating has turned out to be far more frightening.

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Clueless

Why the Elite Media Don't Understand America

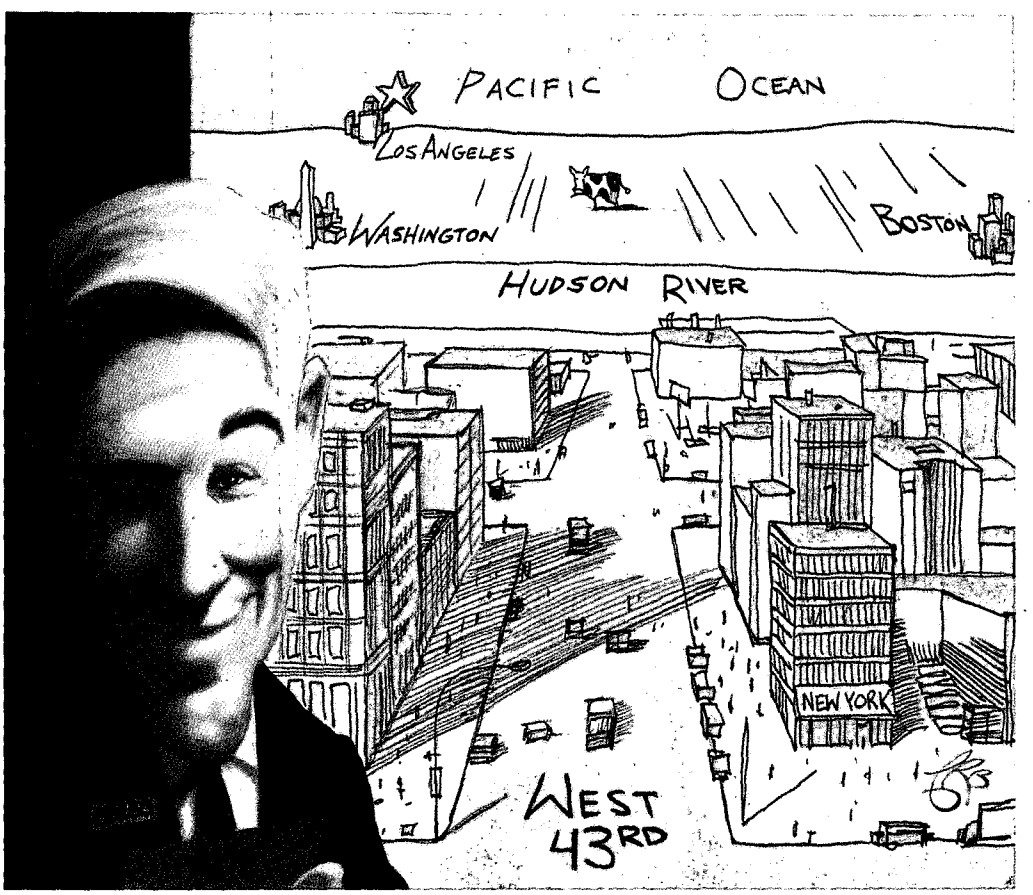

illustration by James Bennett

By Joel Kotkin and David Friedman

Over the past 30 years, America's population and economy have shifted decisively away from the Northeast, as powerful new economic and cultural centers have emerged in the West and South. Yet as businesses and people have fled from the nation's birthplace, the media have chosen to return to their Manhattan womb. In the last century, New York editors like Horace Greeley urged Americans westward, and millions took their advice, changing forever the nation's regional balance. The movement continues: Since 1970, population has soared 50 percent in the South and 71 percent in the West, but just 5 percent in the once-dominant Northeast. Economic trends have followed the same pattern: Over the last two decades, Eastern job growth has stumbled along at one-third below the national average.

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By contrast, the media's re-concentration in New York reflects its increasing divorce from the rest of the nation. Studies by Stanley Rothman of Smith College, who has exhaustively researched America's news and entertainment businesses, show New York's media leaders to be among the least religious and most liberal of the country's elite, even compared to government bureaucrats, trial lawyers, judges, and Hollywood. "There are only three actual voting precincts in the whole country that are statistically as left-wing as America's newsrooms," notes Michael Barone, co-author of the *Almanac of American Politics.*

Yet the media's leftward bent often obscures an even more compelling fact: its physical concentration in a single New York borough that is one of the least representative places in modern America. All four national news networks—ABC, NBC, CBS, and Fox—are headquartered within walking distance of each other. The nation's two most dominant papers, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times,* are published within a subway ride of opinion-shaping magazines like *Time, Newsweek, Business Week,* and *Fortune.*

More than liberal bias, this conglomeration of media power increasingly reflects a retrograde Northeastern elitism out of sync with the rest of the country. In response, more and more Americans are tuning out the messages. The establishment media continue to influence one group heavily, however—and that is other elites throughout the country.

Ironically, just two decades ago, the media business resembled what America would later become: highly diverse, dynamic, and profoundly democratic. Newsrooms were filled with up-from-the-ranks veterans, talented college dropouts, and hard-drinking misfits. Local papers were particularly representative in their staffing, and in the days before national newspapers, all-news TV networks, and the Internet, the local press often offered a contrarian perspective to Northeastern establishment wisdom.

More recently, the news media have come to resemble a modern-day caste, largely dominated by a relative handful of individuals sharing a common background and, in most cases, common real estate. There may be more women and minorities in newsrooms today, but in their class and education, Rothman's research shows, the media have become ever more rarified. "Much of [today's] media elite went to Ivy League schools and come from wealthy backgrounds," observes Rothman. "Old-fashioned newspaper people were fading out as early as the 1970s, and they are now basically all gone."

Rothman's research shows that in the 1970s, top editors and reporters in New York and Washington were less likely than other elites—particularly business leaders, high-level bureaucrats, or elite lawyers—to have attended Ivy League colleges or been born into privileged families. By 1995, however, media honchos formed one of the most educationally and socially privileged groups in America, with a higher proportion of Ivy League graduates than any other group except the top lawyers.

Regular TAE contributor Joel Kotkin is John M. Olin Fellow at the Pepperdine Institute for Public Policy. David Friedman is an international consultant and fellow in the MIT Japan program.

In contrast, the media's West Coast cousin, Hollywood, has never quite substituted caste-like succession for an up-from-the-ranks culture. Less than 18 percent of Hollywood's elite come from parents with graduate school educations, versus nearly 30 percent for the media caste. This helps explain Rothman's surprising finding that while Hollywood is as socially liberal as the print and broadcast media, it is far more conservative on economic issues: TV and movie executives, products of a hotly competitive business world, still tend to earn—not matriculate—their way to success.

Several factors unique to the news media explain why Northeastern elites have stymied the democratization and geographical dispersion that have occurred in other U.S. institutions. Even closely related sectors like the entertainment industry have become far more widely spread in communities like Nashville, the Bay Area, or New Orleans. Independent production companies, new record labels, even new studios have regularly undone efforts to concentrate control.

Television, radio, and newspapers, however, are far more routinized, predictable, ad-driven businesses than entertainment. They now attract big financial interests that relentlessly consolidate players into major networks and regional affiliates, while raising the costs of entry for new firms. Heavy government regulation of the broadcast spectrum has definitely helped the industry fight off entrepreneurial challenges and preserve its caste privileges.

These trends were profoundly reinforced by the rise of elite journalism schools, which rapidly became breeding grounds for an approved media consciousness. Although many media professionals profess to view such programs with suspicion—the *New Republic* savaged Columbia's school of journalism in 1993—nonetheless an elite college credential is now the sesame to top jobs in print, television, and other news sectors. As one student confessed, "There is an amazing Ivy League door-opening thing that goes on when you mention Columbia."

Other big industries have begun to emphasize credentials too, but as smaller firms, many located in the nation's "hinterlands," have displaced larger businesses in many sectors of our economy, they have moderated this obsession. Throughout the country—from Houston oil firms to Nashville's music industry—verve, aggression, and natural talent remain far more important than accidents of birth, breeding, or college ties.

Even a decade ago, upstarts like Ted Turner's Atlanta-based CNN, the Financial News Network in Los Angeles, and fledgling publishing empires in Miami (Knight Ridder), San Diego (Copley), and Virginia (Gannet) seemed to signal that the news media would join in the decentralizing trend. But this promise died stillborn, a victim of mergers and personal ambition.

Time Warner, the ultimate bastion of Manhattan elitism, subsumed CNN and seduced Turner (whose bid for CBS in league with financier Mike Milken had once sent shockwaves through the New York establishment) with charter membership in the Manhattan elite. The Financial News Network was swallowed up by CNBC, creating yet another New York perspective on fi-

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nancial markets, the economy, and social trends. Regional networks never expanded to fill the void.

New York's media concentration was further hastened by the dramatic decline of Washington, D.C., once its greatest rival. A decade ago leading intellectuals like conservatives Irving and William Kristol flocked to the nation's capital, ground zero of a sharp ideological battle for the future of the country, if not the world.

But the end of the Cold War, the takeover of Congress by Republicans averse to Washington empire-building, and the election of an administration devoid of a purpose greater than fending off scandal have severely reduced Washington's importance. The Dow Jones average has replaced State Department and Pentagon briefings as the daily media touchstone.

Washington as a place to live also declined markedly under Marion Barry, becoming one of the most dangerous, unattractive urban areas in the country. As New York under Mayor Rudy Giuliani restrained crime and street-level paupery in areas frequented by the well-to-do, media elites shifted their emphasis, and often their residence, to Gotham.

"New York is the biggest beneficiary of Washington's fall," observes Fred Siegel, whose recent book, *The Future Once Happened Here* chronicles the history of New York, Washington, and Los Angeles. "What I see now is the resurgence of old-fashioned ego-centrism: I live here and it counts."

The strange concentration of book publishers, influential newspaper and magazine editors, and TV executives within a few square blocks of Manhattan would be little more than an oddity but for one fact: this parochialism leads the media caste to perpetuate many damaging myths about America's dispersed, ever-democratizing, ever-evolving society and economy. By rights, our national media should be reflecting and explaining the country in all of its far-flung economic, technological, and political hues. Yet with the notable exception of talk radio and a few journals, they do very poorly on this front.

Because the nation's media elite increasingly resemble an aristocracy, hailing from the same exclusive schools and privileged backgrounds, it's not surprising that surveys show key members share remarkably narrow common views on issues like the environment, abortion, and economics. "These guys are basically all from the same place. They all read the *New York Times,* and they talk to each other more than anyone else," Professor Rothman notes. And like any group, the media elite pursues its own self-interest—even if its leaders hotly deny it.

Thus the parochial perspectives of a few over-privileged Manhattanites are taking on a far greater importance in the national discourse than they deserve. And this is having an effect: According to Rothman's data, local elites *outside* the Northeast, including traditionally conservative groups like local heads of Chambers of Commerce or managers of large corporations, are beginning to shift towards New York elite opinion on critical social and economic issues. Many regional media outlets—typically run by individuals aspiring to New York caste membership—now slavishly propagate the highbrow Manhattan consensus.

All this has its lighter moments. As the national media mutates into the mouthpiece of elite New York culture, even the most minute elements of that city's privileged lifestyles—from Soho chic to Times Square's Disney-esque revival—are treated as matters of global importance. A significant portion of American decision makers now treat new restaurant openings and celebrity apartment purchases in midtown Manhattan as more telling economic indicators than the vastly more significant growth of the rest of America.

Indeed, now that conditions in Manhattan have visibly improved along the sidewalks they frequent, New York media elites are embarrassing themselves with an orgy of boosterism. *Time* and *Newsweek* recently published fawning multi-page stories celebrating New York's "resurgence." *Vanity Fair*'s editors have anointed New York as the "champagne city." *Fortune* has gone so far as to claim that New York is now the "Best" U.S. City for Business.

One of your authors is a native New Yorker, and both of us welcome recent signs of improvement in the city, but it's wrong for the N.Y.-centric media to allow their parochial class interests to color their portrayals of national issues. As one senior *New York Times* editor concedes, the city's media elite has a vested interest in supporting its real estate and other regional investments. "We think part of our job is figuring out reasons why people should stay here," he told us. "I think we have a right to do that."

This agenda, however, profoundly distorts trends in the U.S. economy, because the influence of the *New York Times* and its Manhattan siblings extends far beyond Gotham City. If the *Arizona Republic* exaggerates Phoenix's glories, few people outside the Valley of the Sun care. But when the New York media fall in love with themselves (or treat other parts of the nation with the cold shoulder or old stereotypes, which is an even bigger problem), the unrepresentative make-up of our establishment media becomes a national dilemma.

Take *Fortune*'s "analysis" of New York City as the nation's premier business location. To come to this astounding conclusion, the magazine's supposedly hardbitten, reflexively skeptical editors had to ignore mountains of disturbing evidence of economic dysfunction. The fact is, New York City continues to be hobbled by America's heaviest taxes, one of the nation's highest unemployment rates, job creation levels far below the national average, and the lowest proportion of its population in the labor force of any major city. In Cognetics, Inc.'s widely watched survey of fast-growing businesses, New York ranks forty-seventh out of fifty metropolitan regions, ahead of only Albany, Rochester, and Hartford—all in the economically-lagging Northeast.

It's even more unbelievable that *not one city* in Texas, Florida, or California—the three states that generate 70 percent of all new American jobs—made *Fortune*'s top ten of best cities for business. "How can you talk about the 'best' economies in places that create half the number of new jobs we've created here?" asks Jim Kollaer, a business leader in Houston, one of America's most rapidly growing big cities. The answer is simple: Places like Houston, Salt Lake City, and Phoenix, are simply not

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WHILE AMERICA'S POPULATION AND ECONOMY HAVE SHIFTED AWAY FROM THE NORTHEAST, THE MEDIA HAVE RETURNED TO THEIR MANHATTAN WOMB, EXAGGERATING THEIR DIVORCE FROM THE REST OF THE NATION.

fashionable—indeed are often looked down upon—by reporters cocooned in the Northeast.

Another example of the reality-warping effects of the media elite's parochialism is the abortive campaign of the New York media to proclaim their city a powerhouse in the important new industry of multimedia. The city has been dubbed "Silicon Alley" and the nation's "cyber-capital" by various publications—largely on the back of anecdotes concocted by local real estate opportunists. "Our strategy was to take an empty building and make it digital" (wire it with outlets), confesses John Gilbert, chief operating officer for the Rudin Group, one the New York's largest and most aggressive real estate firms. "There's always attention focused on New York, and there's all the media here to get." With their interest in portraying their hometown as a progressive economic leader, the establishment media based in New York have uncritically swallowed many absurd claims.

Anyone familiar with high-tech development knows that New York's cyber-sector is actually smaller, according to objective studies, than competitors in San Francisco and Los Angeles. "'Silicon Alley' seems to have been a great marketing notion…but economically it's not much," admits Steve Lohr, who covered multimedia for the *New York Times* before finding that the reality increasingly diverged from the hype. "Name the major stand-alone multimedia companies that have emerged from New York. Do any exist?"

Class and regional identities within the elite media are strong enough to trump even ideological divisions. The recent lionization of New York mayor Rudy Giuliani, for example, is partly a product of New York-based conservatives effusing in outlets like the *Weekly Standard*. Strangely, many of the same conservatives who sneer at figures like Los Angeles mayor Richard Riordan or New Jersey governor Christie Whitman as liberal apostates are enthusiastic Giuliani boosters. This is telling, given Giuliani's aggressive support for measures like rent control, massive corporate subsidies, gay rights, and racial preferences, not to mention his endorsements of liberal Democrats over more conservative Republican opponents. (Giuliani campaigned for Mario Cuomo against George Pataki, and Bill Clinton against Bob Dole.)

The media caste's true ideology arises from its peculiar class interests, and the unprecedented comfort it enjoys in a Northeastern Corridor that is still profoundly anti-business, anti-growth, and anti-working-class. Simply because conditions have improved noticeably for upper-income earners in Manhattan, Bethesda, and Cambridge, the media's liberal elites have decided to ignore the unbalanced economies that now creak along in their cultural strongholds.

In New York City, for instance, many neighborhoods remain in terrible shape. Just-released Census Bureau figures covering the first three years of the '90s show that in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, median household income actually *fell* (in the case of the Bronx, to a level fully $10,000 below the national median). Even in Manhattan, the borough-wide median income dipped by $300—over a period when the *national* median was *climbing* $1,185.

There is good reason to distrust the picture of our nation projected by today's media caste. This is partly because the economic view of today's elite media is heavily driven by "post-industrial" fantasies that hype non-manufacturing industries, the importance of white-collar jobs, and the primacy of symbolic ethnic or gender goals over grubby increases in business productivity.

New York City is *the* post-industrial capital of America—a place with an overall static economy and a manufacturing base that fell from 610,000 jobs in 1980 to just 250,000 today (barely a fraction of what exists in Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, or Houston today). Those trends are coupled with the presence of America's most militant public employee unions and a massive welfare bureaucracy. But rather than being exemplary models for the rest of the nation, as the media often seem to believe, these economic lessons do not easily apply to the world inhabited by most Americans, perhaps even most New Yorkers.

Unfortunately, some cities and regions have decided to cater to the media's prevailing economic nostrums in order to win favorable coverage that might help them lure national attention and capital away from more deserving regions. Because so many reporters are now office-bound in Northeastern glass towers, savvy consultants and quote-meisters pushing the right buttons can easily hoodwink them. For example: By touting a handful of clean, campus-like developments that appealed to the sensibilities of Ivy-trained journalists, Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, has emerged as the preferred model of academic-led, high-tech development. "There's a kind of elitism here that attracts reporters. It's different than trying to sell them Charlotte or Houston," notes Bob Goodale, deputy secretary of North Carolina's Department of Commerce. "In a place like this they never get shown the warts, and they'll never know the difference."

Raleigh-Durham has done all right for itself, fostering a total of some 60,000 high-tech jobs by 1995 estimates. But that is less than exist in places like Philadelphia or Orange County, California, and is less than *half* the number of high tech jobs in Dallas. So why the media bubble? Those other areas may be too business-oriented, too rough-edged, perhaps too politically conservative in culture to attract reporters who prefer liberal college towns like Raleigh, or Madison, Wisconsin, or Austin, Texas, as their American exemplars.

"A lot of people want to go do chi-chi stories about Austin," observes Cognetics president David Birch. "But Dallas is so much bigger. It's a behemoth that you never hear about it." Disfavored regions like Dallas have grown despite elite media indifference. But how much more productive would America now be if the media had accurately reported to the citizenry who the nation's industrial stars (and industrial stinkers) really are?

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MORE PUBLICATIONS NEED TO COVER, AND BE BASED IN, LOCATIONS THAT ARE CURRENTLY IGNORED BY THE NATIONAL PRESS.

Addiction to the post-industrial fantasy also explains the almost pathological fascination media elites display for environmentalism. Like the British gentry, who justified their nation's consolidation of property into just a few hands as a form of "conservation," there is an ugly exclusionary tinge to the media's support today for even the most outlandish environmentalist efforts.

De-industrialized Manhattan risks few job losses from draconian pollution standards. And unlike Western states that may have half of their acreage in federal hands, the city has little to fear from giving state or federal regulators greater control over land they oversee. New York barely understands the difficult environmental-versus-economic choices that other parts of the country face, simply because it has relatively little development, growth, or fresh expansion to be reconciled with. Over the past year, the entire Northeast built barely one-tenth the new industrial space constructed in regions such as the Southeast, the Intermountain West, the Pacific Northwest, and the Southwest.

These realities explain why, despite a treaty unconscionably skewed against the U.S. (and opposed by virtually all manufacturers and private-sector unions), the mainstream media reverently touted the benefits of the recent global warming "protocol" in Kyoto. The jobs of Manhattan and Washington journalists simply weren't at stake. Many of those few still left in Brooklyn, not to mention hundreds of thousands in heavily industrialized California, Illinois, or Arizona, are however.

Similarly, the flood of editorials in the establishment media last summer in favor of the Clinton administration's regressive new air quality standards were inspired in considerable measure by an unusually smoggy year in Maine and Martha's Vineyard. Shutting down midwestern powerplants and factories counts for little if that's what it takes to keep elite, private valhallas pristine.

The media further confuses economic reality by crudely equating the interests of Wall Street with the interests of Main Street. In truth, only 7,000 of America's more than 6 million businesses of record are traded on public exchanges. Wall Street does well when companies cut jobs and create "balance-sheet" profits. Main Street prospers more when local jobs and sales expand.

New York reporters haven't noticed that even on Wall Street itself, prosperity is something more complicated than just the Dow Jones average. Finance now produces a greater share of New York's total city income than a decade ago, but the number of jobs in the finance industry is actually less than in the 1980s. So even as Wall Street booms, a relatively narrow group of workers is benefiting. Recent studies show that income disparities between the wealthiest and poorest fifths of New York's population are worse than anywhere else in America. Even more telling, the gap between the city's *middle class* and its most affluent denizens is also the widest in the nation. But don't count on reporters enjoying all the new pasta houses in the financial district to understand this.

The media's social milieu differs from Middle America at least as much as their economic milieu does. Compared to Main Street, media types marry less, divorce more, are oftener childless, are mostly unchurched, and frequently lack familiarity with normal American suburban life. One result of all this is that our major press regularly misses, ignores, or scoffs at important trends sweeping the heartland of the nation. Over the last two decades, this has happened with scores of big stories.

For instance, our major media didn't spot the religious renewal now underway in America until long after it had taken off. They were completely surprised by the recent flipover to a Republican Congress—a flummoxed Peter Jennings, remember, called the '94 vote a "temper tantrum." In 1992, the establishment political press had no idea Pat Buchanan could win 40 percent of the New Hampshire primary vote against a sitting President—because New Hampshire isn't media elite habitat. (Vermont is more to their taste.)

Earlier, Ronald Reagan's 1980 election stunned most of our media elite, and his continuing popularity with the public throughout the '80s left them mystified. The N.Y./D.C. media were also blindsided by developments like the rejection by many American women, over the last decade, of feminism as a term of self-description. (Many still don't realize it has happened.) Other cultural realities in "flyover country"—like the peculiar American attachment to guns, the popular appeal of someone like Dr. Laura Schlessinger, the revolt against liberalism by white males—have likewise bewildered our provincial media elite.

What should the rest of the country, from the Grand Ole Opry to Grand Rapids, do about all this? One strategy is to simply tune out. "The conservative half of the country ignores the national media," Michael Barone maintains. "Their ratings in the hinterlands are horrible." This strategy soothes the frayed sensitivities of those driven crazy by the media's regional, class, and ideological biases. It does little, however, to balance the message received by the other, largely urban, heavily politicized half of America.

A better response might be to reignite the decentralization trends that earlier birthed CNN, FNN, and influential regional print media. More publications need to cover, *and be based in*, locations that are currently ignored or crudely stereotyped by the national press. If average Americans begin to understand the nature and narrowness of today's dominant media caste—and their ability to twist our perceptions of reality—they will search out alternatives for their own good. People in Denver, Indianapolis, Nashville, and other parts of this broad, varied, and prosperous nation must realize that if they define their lives and their civilization based on what the establishment media tell them is true, they are endangering their prosperity and their birthrights.

Maybe then a few entrepreneurs (ideally, aided by an opening of the airwaves from Washington's regulators) will see the nation's need for alternative means of news reporting. And the sooner a challenge is offered to America's domination by today's smug and short-sighted media caste, the better.

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Nashville Rides a Wave

and Wonders Where It's Heading

By Philip Langdon

To people not attracted to its music, Nashville has long seemed a cultural curiosity—a source of lachrymose songs delivered by men decked out in cowboy hats and women with a taste for elaborate hairdos. ■ Country music *is* the defining image of Nashville. But the real Nashville, as opposed to the entertainment-driven stereotype, is much more complex, and intriguing. On the rolling land along the broad-looping Cumberland River is a rising, remarkably hopeful metropolis, one whose growth consistently outpaces the nation's. Nashville is booming. And as it booms, it is coming face to face with all the issues that confront American cities at their most dynamic.

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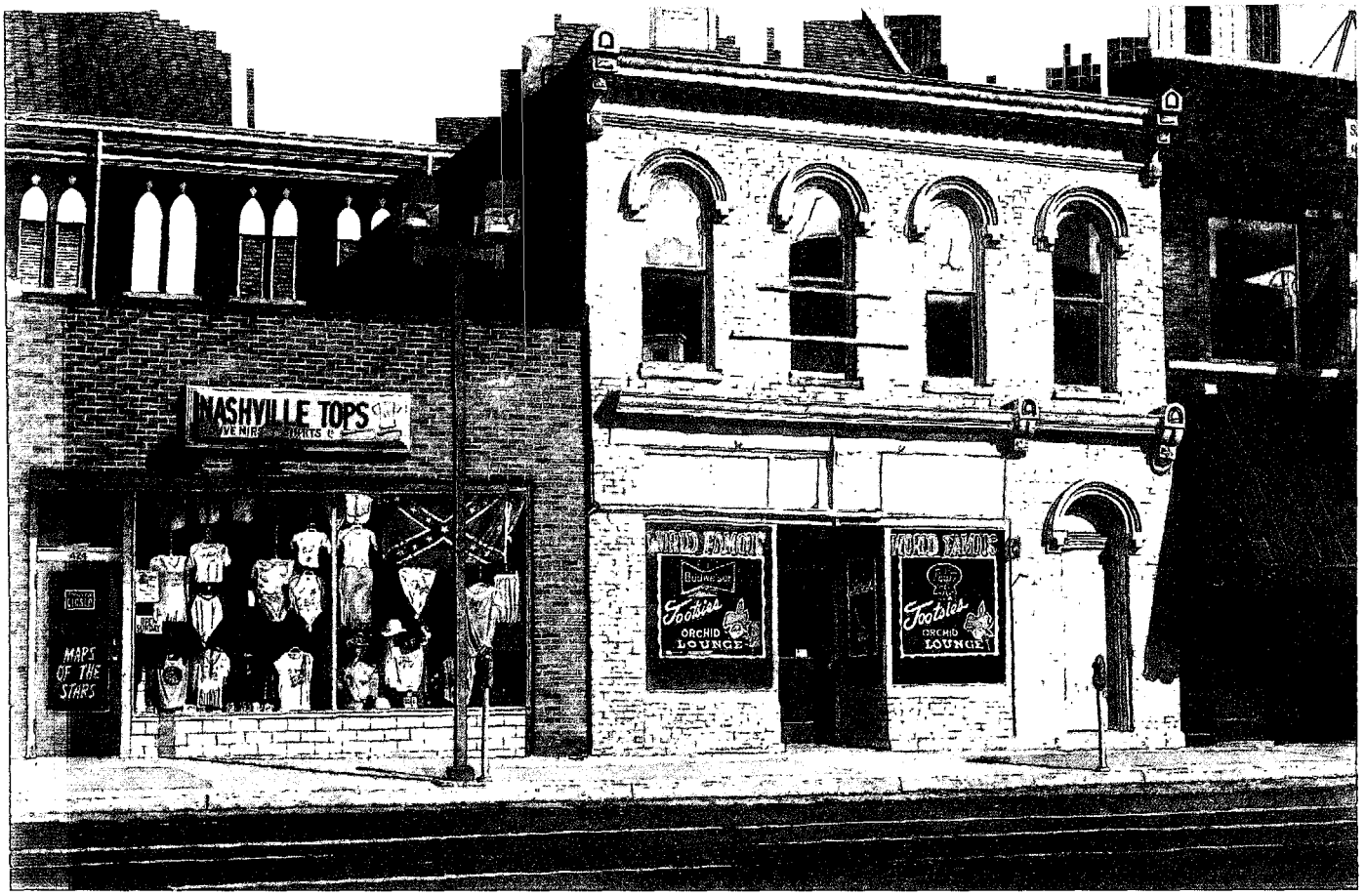

Tootsies w/c paper 18 x 26 inches, 1984 coll. Cheekwood Museum, Nashville, TN.

Tootsies, a legendary honky-tonk located on Broadway, with the Ryman Auditorium looming in the background. Painting by local artist John Baeder.

No place I've ever spent time in, except for central Texas, is more outgoing than Nashville. "People speak to you for no reason," says Greer Broemel, executive assistant at the Greater Nashville Regional Council, who arrived in town some 23 years ago and continues to be amazed by the friendliness. "You stand in line at the grocery store and they start a conversation with you," says Broemel. "There's a good life to be had here."

Religion is a strong part of that life. The area abounds with churches—Church of Christ, Methodist, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Baptist, and others. "The first question in a lot of people's mouths is 'What church do you belong to?'" observes Bob Bernstein, who grew up Jewish in a Chicago suburb and moved to Nashville a decade ago. Churches are everywhere, even in the middle of downtown. There's a reason the Nashville area is called "the buckle of the Bible belt."

TAE associate editor Philip Langdon has written two books and numerous articles on community life and design.

Nashville was a pioneer in metropolitan government, consolidating the city and Davidson County by popular vote in 1962. The city currently has 536,000 inhabitants (placing it 24th in the nation), 73 percent white, about 25 percent African-American, and with a small but rapidly growing number of Asians and Hispanics. The greater metro area includes eight counties, which together contain 1.1 million inhabitants.

Thanks to its vibrant economy, Nashville's income ($23,655 per capita) now surpasses the U.S. average of $20,800. The city's current unemployment rate is 3.3 percent. Crime is front-page news—murders, many of them linked to drugs, reached a record high last year—but the violence has not sent Nashville into the downward spiral of cities elsewhere. The consolidated government has preserved for the city a strong tax base, wide powers, and a feeling that problems can be managed. But it is in the outlying counties, which now hold slightly more than half the region's population, that the numbers are rising fastest. Nashville, like a lot of cities, is losing its focus as it grows.

One of the ironies of this economically ambitious area is that it stands near the center of the South, a section of the country where, from pre-Civil War days through the early decades of the twentieth century, there were strong misgivings about the North's embrace of large-scale commerce and industry. Southern agrarian planters and intellectuals looked with distaste upon efficient, impersonal northern industrialists, and professed that a society based on tradition and close personal friendships was closer to the human ideal.

That old rural mode of thinking has not disappeared entirely, but it certainly seems antique today. Though agrarian impulses echo in country songs, the occupations that contemporary Middle Tennesseans pursue do not require a broad-brimmed hat to keep the sun off your neck. Greater Nashvillians now work in auto manufacturing, health care and hospital-management systems, insurance, publishing, finance, education, government, the music business, and other white-collar and service industries. In all, Nashville boasts a thoroughly modern economy—a wealth-generating

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machine that continually expands into formerly remote areas.

Directly south of Nashville, for instance, Williamson County, which had 30,000 residents in 1970, has 107,000 today. With Broemel, I went exploring Williamson's rapidly growing Cool Springs area, just off Interstate 65. It's a territory where construction is transforming what had been open farmland. A high-toned shopping mall, the Cool Springs Galleria, was the first large development to arrive. Now corporate offices have begun to follow, and housing subdivisions are going up as fast as contractors can build them.

"I don't know if this is excellent," Broemel remarked as we entered one such development, "but by God it's big!" Apartment buildings two, three, and four stories high stretch on and on across the site. Above the balconied apartments, on a hillside, rise large new single-family houses, not truly integrated with the apartments to form a single community, but too close for the two economic classes to ignore each other. "The people who live in single-family houses feel very threatened by the multifamily people," Broemel reflected. So there will be some tension in this brand-new community. But, she noted, the stone masonry, done by Mexican laborers new to Nashville, looks quite attractive. "There's a lot of trees and landscaping," Broemel said. "They're trying."

Because it is located in a prestigious, upper-income corner of the metropolitan area, Cool Springs is a magnet for development, and may become Nashville's first "edge city"—a collection of offices, shopping, hotels, housing, and entertainment, very loosely held together by big roads full of traffic. For many, this style of suburban living is welcome progress, a step up. But it does not please everyone. South of Franklin, the charming old Williamson County seat, local historian Rick Warwick and I rode past other new subdivisions. "Inverness," said Warwick, reciting the name of one of them. "Claremont," he pronounced another, a tinge of sarcasm in his voice. "They come up with such beautiful names." He looked at another tract, Founders Pointe, and his displeasure turned intense. "It's a sea of ghettoes," he declared. "They're expensive houses, but they're built so cheaply they'll turn into slums."

Houses in Franklin, Tennessee

Photos by Phil Langdon

That complaint is essentially the same accusation that the century's most prominent urban critic, Lewis Mumford, made against Levittown, Long Island, when it was new, and Mumford was proven wrong. Homeowners personalized and expanded their houses—poured their hearts and their paychecks into them. Fifty years later Levittown is considered a desirable place to live. It is no slum.

The real issue is not whether the new subdivisions will degenerate into squalor (they won't) but whether these developments are likely to become soul-satisfying communities, like towns created over a much longer span of time. Those who savor rural and small-town ways, like Warwick, are right to be distressed, because in greater Nashville, as in most of America, the outskirts are quickly ceasing to be countryside, without becoming either natural extensions of established old towns or becoming true towns in their own right.

"There are only about five full-time farmers left in Williamson County," Warwick lamented as we passed another subdivision. "Agriculture is just a dying occupation in this county."

Then we arrived at Leiper's Fork, an area that's been discovered in recent years by people who have hit the jackpot in country music and other lucrative Nashville enterprises. Some of these individuals are buying old farms and turning them into rural showpieces, as perfect as a scene in *Vermont Life*. Buildings of cinder block or prosaic asphalt siding suddenly sport handsome new coverings of clapboard. The commonplace becomes idyllic.

Investors such as Aubrey Preston, who made his money in health care, have purchased land along the pretty two-lane road through little Leiper's Fork with the intention of deed-restricting it against future development. "I bought about 2,100 acres," Preston said. "About a dozen friends bought five to 150 acres each, some of it in strategic spots. We have a pretty strong collective of people, going against the grain." So under private initiative, parts of Nashville's rural periphery are likely to become beautiful but exclusive country preserves.

Public policies on countryside development are few and weak. Philip Walker of Community Planning & Research, a Nashville consulting firm, was called upon to help the newly incorporated town of Nolensville draw up planning and zoning regulations that would give the 1,800-person town a better chance of retaining its existing character. For much of the rural town, he proposed five-acre lots, but with a density-bonus option that would generously reward developers if they clustered new houses in certain areas and left much of the land as open space. Land owners, however, who are entitled by current zoning to erect a house on every acre and a half,

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saw the proposed zoning as a "taking," and sued to stop it. So with no other vision being capable of winning sufficient public and political support, Nolensville appears headed toward becoming carpeted with low-density residential development. Repeated thousands of times, this is how America's country towns stop being country.

In Leiper's Fork, the big worry is an expressway, Route 840, that the Tennessee Department of Transportation is attempting to build encircling Nashville 35 miles out from downtown. Opponents argue that the $1.2 billion highway, already partly built, will ravage the character of many unspoiled areas, bringing development to locations where it's not needed. "What it will do is create urban sprawl like we've never seen before," says Gene Cotton, a singer-songwriter who is fomenting opposition to the highway.

The road is seen by other opponents, in Nashville itself, as a threat to the future of the city, since it will entice people and investment far away from the region's center. That's what big ring roads do. But the state is in a highway-building mode. "Trucking and road-building interests have dominated Tennessee politics since the late 1950s," notes writer Christine Kreyling (co-author of the book *Classical Nashville*). So if present policies continue, Nashville may end up imitating the sprawl of Atlanta. Nashvillians profess to abhor that prospect. Not enough of them oppose it, however, with the kind of muscle that's needed to prevent such a fate.

Nashville's current slogan, "Music City USA," has been wholeheartedly adopted by the Chamber of Commerce. But Nashville used to claim a more high-sounding title: "the Athens of the South." That moniker celebrated the city's numerous colleges and universities, and its nineteenth-century veneration of classical ideals. In Nashville, ideals and intelligence count.

Physical expressions of Nashville's classical aspirations continue to occupy places of honor, even as skyscrapers, sports arenas, and tourist emporia grow up around them. In 1897, Tennessee celebrated its first century of statehood by assembling a lavish exposition on the fairgrounds west of downtown. When the exposition ended, the city couldn't bear to demolish its proudest feature, a full-scale replica of the Parthenon. Instead, the grand Classical temple was kept standing. And when its brick, plaster, and lath proved not to be material for the ages, the city reluctantly took it down and, from 1921 to 1931, constructed a *permanent* Parthenon of concrete aggregate, which continues to preside over Centennial Park.

The future of Nashville looks to be a dynamic contest between the exploding energy of the metropolis and the efforts of its residents to optimize change.

Today the city is investing $13 million in restoring the building. Even while half-encased in scaffolding, it attracts 110,000 visitors annually. People circulate through an art museum in the building's lower level and climb the stairs to a columned central court dominated by a 42-foot statue of Athena unveiled just eight years ago. This precisely accurate Acropolis-on-the-Cumberland is a majestic creation, a testament to Classicism's undying power and to Nashville's appreciation of heritage.

Crowning a downtown knoll is the Classical Capitol designed in 1845 by the architect William Strickland, and directly north of the Capitol is the long slope of the city's Bicentennial Mall, which opened in 1996 to celebrate 200 years of statehood. The mall's 19 acres, organized by Nashville architect Kem Hinton, are chock-full of tributes to Tennessee history and geography. Nashville takes commemoration seriously. An incised granite map, one of the largest in the world, lets adults and children find at their feet the location of every county in the state and see precisely how the roads, rails, and rivers tie them together. Eight pylons honor Tennessee's World War II contributions, such as atomic research at Oak Ridge. The mall cost no small sum—$55 million—but Nashvillians seem to think it's worth it; the mall's principal purpose, which it fulfills admirably, is to preserve forever an open vista of the Capitol, which was becoming hemmed in by downtown high-rises.

Projects like these testify to an enduring civic spirit. Middle Tennesseans are proud of their communities, and are willing to expend time and money to ex-

Kem Hinton, architect, on Bicentennial Mall, Nashville, Tennessee

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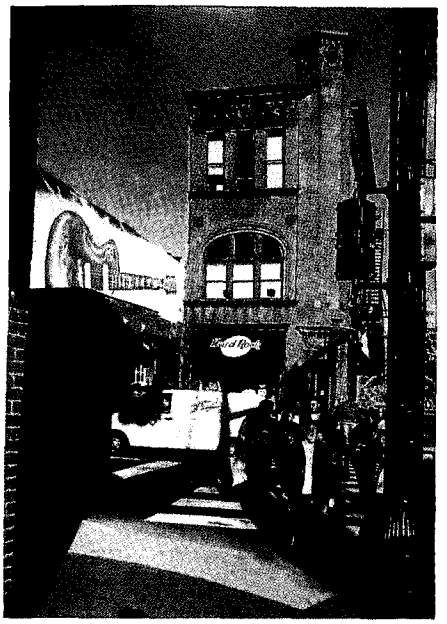
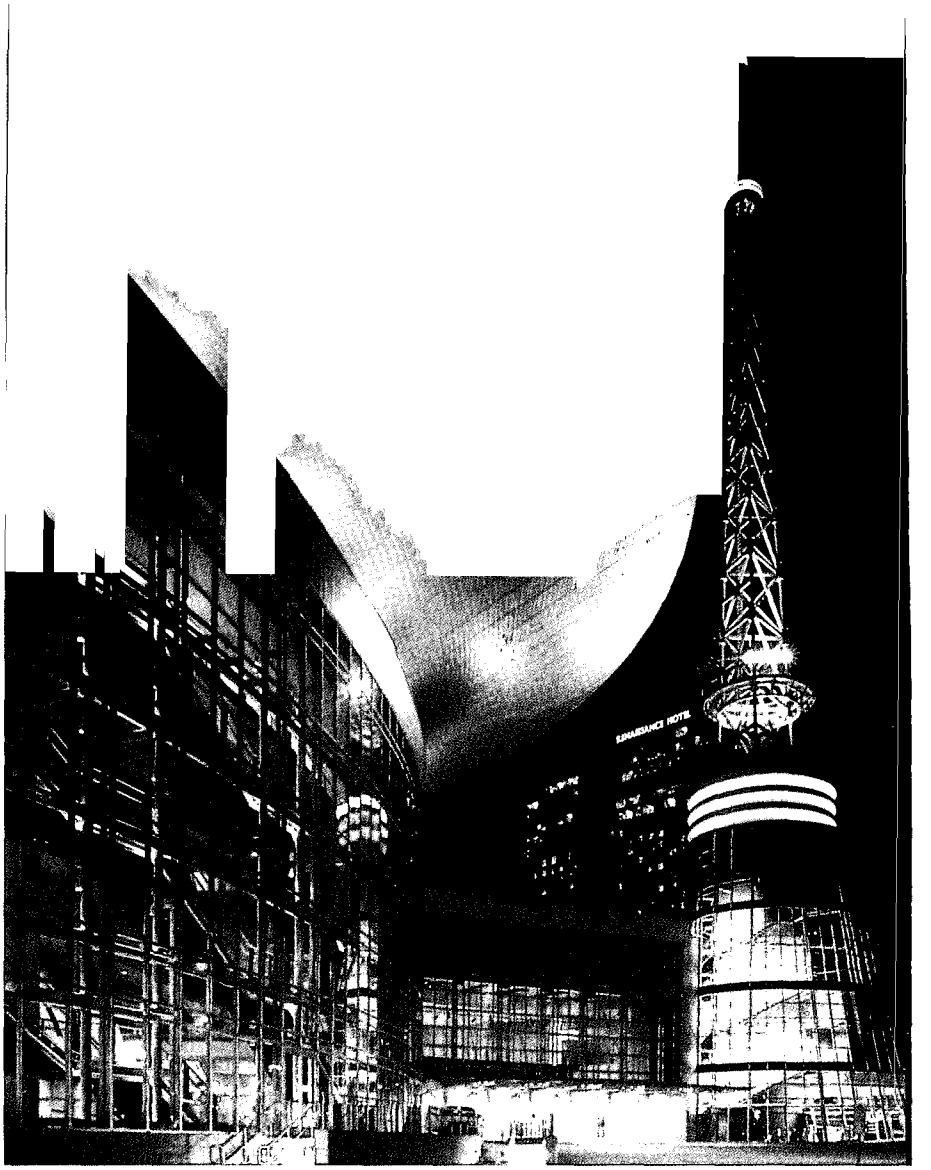


Photo by Phil Langdon

Hard Rock Cafe on Broadway



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The Nashville Arena

press shared purposes. People in the old courthouse town of Franklin enlisted the National Trust for Historic Preservation's "Main Street" program and employed a combination of private and public initiatives to make the town's early twentieth-century business district one of the best preserved and most flourishing in the nation. Enthusiasm runs high; when I stood on the main street, shooting some photos, a local woman virtually ordered me to get into her family wagon so that she could give me a boosterish escorted tour of Franklin's handsomest sites. I was not to be permitted to leave town without a full dose of Franklin's architectural glory.

In downtown Nashville, people tackle complicated preservation challenges. On a Saturday night, I stood in the back balcony of the Ryman Auditorium, the sound of a rollicking Delbert McClinton performance reverberating off of the tan plank ceiling. A constant procession of relaxed, courteous Nashvillians passed by, carrying cups of beer or Jack Daniel's cocktails to the curving old wooden church pews that serve as the Ryman's seating. Built in 1895 as the Union Gospel Tabernacle and converted long ago into the city's most famous music hall, the Ryman was where the Grand Old Opry conducted shows from 1941 to 1974. When the Opry moved to the new Opryland quarters well east of downtown, there was a protracted struggle. Was the stolid old Gothic building worth saving? The answer: Yes. And the struggle ended as it should have, with renovation and, in 1994, the reopening. The Ryman, as much as any building, is now the soul of the city.

Just around the corner from the Ryman is Broadway—a few years ago a tawdry old strip containing peep shows and other low-grade amusements. Indeed, it was partly because of Broadway's forlorn condition that the owners of the Ryman had for a time seen no future in that wonderful old hall. Now Broadway is rapidly changing. So is Second Avenue South, the historic old warehouse district that it intersects. On weekends, the old buildings and the sidewalks teem with life.

But the changes are not all for the good. Ann Reynolds, executive director of the Metro Historical Commission, points out that on Second Avenue, "interesting retailing," such as a bookstore and an art gallery, has recently been giving way to more touristy businesses which in her view diminish the district's long-term allure and distinctiveness. Planet Hollywood and the Hard Rock Café have been imported to Broadway. So has the NASCAR Café—a drinking and entertainment emporium with stock-car racing as its theme. These high-profile, heavily financed, national enterprises share the street with older record shops, boot stores advertising "three pairs $99.99," and beloved old honky-tonks described by Reynolds as "beer-drinking places with country music for regular folks." Locals fear the honky-tonks may be forced out by prosperity. Nashville may be gaining a tourist district but losing the ordinary establishments that make Broadway a gathering place for locals.

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Preservationists are also worried because big-budget enterprises like Planet Hollywood do not just occupy old buildings; they rip out the interiors, turning three stories into two and putting the new second floor where it makes the original window openings unusable. "What is the life expectancy of a NASCAR Café or a Planet Hollywood?" Reynolds asks. She fears that when the now-popular entertainment formats in these radically redone buildings run their course, it may be exorbitantly expensive to convert the buildings to a new purpose.

In the U.S., the battle to make and preserve a robust urban center has to be fought continually, especially now, when there are so many incentives for development to shift toward a region's edge. Nashville is making a concerted effort to keep its center strong. Regional attractions usually end up in or close to the downtown. A new football stadium for the Oilers is under construction just across the Cumberland from downtown, in what had been a gritty area of bridge- and barge-builders. The Nashville Arena, home to the Nashville Kats arena football team and soon to be the lair of the Predators of the National Hockey League, anchors a portion of Broadway not far from the Ryman. Designed by HOK Sport of Kansas City, the Arena is an astounding building, especially at night when the huge curving underside of its upper structure glows with reflected light. The tower that rises from one corner of the complex looks like something out of Buck Rogers. The Arena is an amazing, imaginative facility, and its placement next to the eating and drinking places of Broadway helps keep downtown active after nightfall.

Mayor Philip Bredesen, an entrepreneur who made his millions in health care, is not embedded in the good old boy network and is credited with bringing a high level of intelligence to the office. "The mayor is one of the reasons people are so positive," says Seab Tuck III, a local architect.

"A great city has a great library," bumper stickers proclaim. Bredesen has pressed to replace the inadequate downtown library with a new one more than three times its size—one that will have a big reading room, a grand feature of traditional libraries. Says Tuck: "The mayor has a sense of civic space." Philip Walker, whose firm was hired to conduct a careful study weighing the pros and cons of several possible locations for the library, notes that "A lot of cities don't go about a decision like this with a real methodical approach." Bredesen's systematic method takes the arbitrariness out of the decision, and should also allay citizen skepticism about whose property is selected. As of this writing, the $67 million library may be built on the site of a failed indoor shopping mall that was constructed just nine years ago on Church Street—the street that historically was the center of downtown retailing but now stands riddled with vacancies, the last department store having closed a little over a year ago.

Today, when there are so many incentives for development to shift toward a region's edge, Nashville is making a concerted effort to keep its center strong.

The downtown needs people living in it. So the city government recently used financial incentives to get a 23-story apartment tower built last year in the largely vacant retail district. More extensive downtown projects are in the works. Rolling Mill Hill, a 35-acre hilltop occupied by a hospital and other buildings, will, if all goes well, be redeveloped into a neighborhood of more than 1,400 residential units, a hotel, offices, shops, and art spaces. Like the high-rise building, Rolling Mill Hill will use tax-increment financing, a tool that allows private developers to count a portion of their site preparation and construction costs against their property taxes.

Prodded by Kreyling's pointed critiques in the *Scene*, the mayor has also taken an interest in how to redesign a major traffic artery so that a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere can take hold. Boston's Commonwealth Avenue—an elegant boulevard with trees, grass, and walkways in the middle and with grand old urban buildings along the perimeter—was suggested as one model for making over the Franklin Street corridor in a way that would encourage people to live and spend time downtown. How far such ideas will go is unclear. Nashville is much less dense than cities like Boston, New Orleans, and Chicago. It's possible that a few pockets of the metropolitan area will evolve into stimulating, mixed-use areas—places where people like to walk—while the rest continues developing in a sprawling, almost completely automobile-dependent manner. When I asked Stewart Clifton, a member of Nashville's Metro Council, whether he thinks Nashville is in control of its growth, he replied, "I don't know. It's a good question. There's a sense that the growth may have been at too rapid a pace. That's a major feeling here."

What's ultimately encouraging about Nashville is that as growth speeds up—spinning out new challenges and uncertainties—local people are launching fresh efforts to shape development intelligently. Just over a year ago, an Urban Design Forum emerged where designers, developers, public officials, and everyone else concerned about the shape of the city can discuss projects and issues in a neutral setting, and learn to do better. "The point," says Kreyling, "is to get ahead of the curve."

The future of Nashville looks to be a dynamic contest between the exploding energy of the metropolis and the efforts of its residents to optimize change. Certainly growth has brought problems. But it has also opened up possibilities—in Nashville's case, some dizzyingly exciting ones. That's why, despite disquiet in some quarters, the transformations rippling through Nashville these days are the kind that most Americans living in stagnant or declining cities would be only too happy to face.

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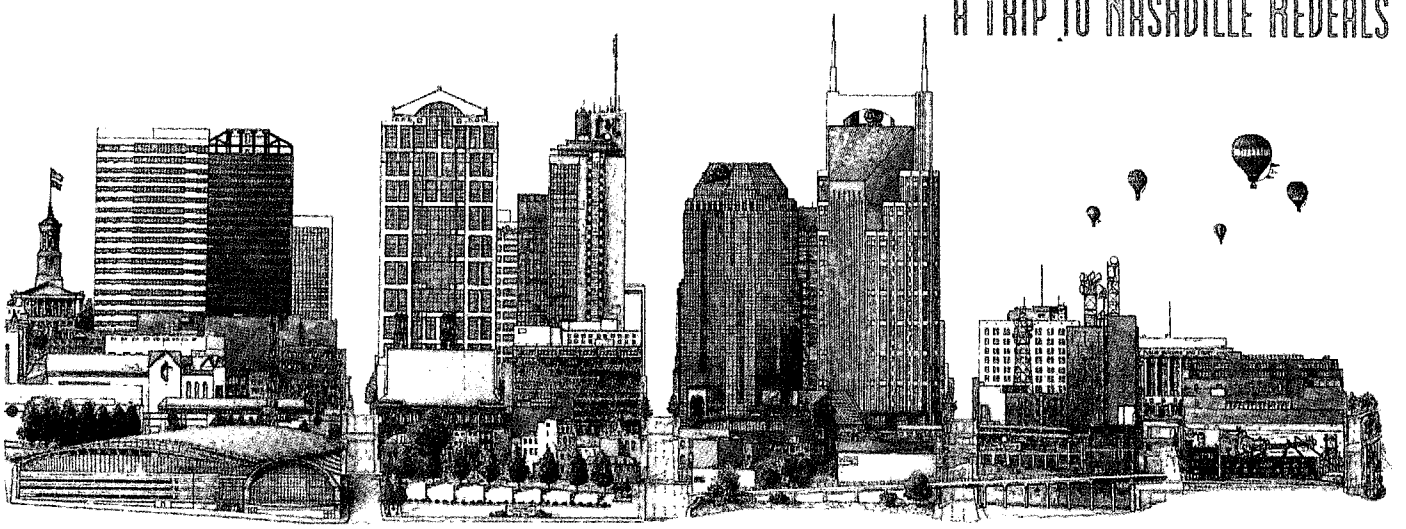
Why Do Boom Towns Boom?

It's the Culture, a Trip to Nashville Reveals



Downtown Nashville

By Richard Miniter

Entrepreneurs seeing Nashville for the first time usually do so through the windshield of a rented car. Maybe they come down to scout for the right place to base their business, or just to take a job with hopes of starting their own company later. Either way, they take Interstate 40 in from the airport and drive toward the skyscrapers. ■ Why do they come? a social scientist might wonder. What draws entrepreneurs to Nashville, when at least a dozen other Sun Belt cities have equally low taxes, light regulations, moderate climes, decent neighborhoods, and solid local institutions? "It's not just the numbers that matter to me," an entrepreneur might answer, "it's the culture." As he drives into the heart of one of America's great boom towns, he tries to see if Nashville really has the entrepreneurial ethos he has heard so much about.

As the entrepreneur passes the exit for the Opryland Hotel he thinks, "Country music, yeah, this is Nashville." He has studied the market research and knows that what city boosters call "Music City USA" is a lot more than just the country music capital of the world. He dimly remembers that Nashville is quickly becoming the "third coast" for entertainment: country, Christian, and pop music recording studios, cable television headquarters, music video and film production facilities, amusement parks, public relations offices, agents, and all the rest.

The entrepreneur doesn't know the numbers, but if he did, he would be surprised. There are an estimated 20,000 songwriters in Nashville, and at least 120 music publishing companies. American country music sales grew from $250 million in 1975 to more than $2.5 billion in 1995, according to the Country Music Association. Nearly all of that comes out of Nashville.

In addition, "Nashville is the Christian music capital of the world," says Jim Van Hook, the president of Brentwood Music, and the city is also rapidly becoming a leader in production of folk, classical, and top 40 music. "Knowing the cost of making great music in Nashville, why would you even consider some place else?" asks Roger Sovine, vice president of BMI Nashville. "Nashville will become the center of pop music by the end of the century," predicts Mike Curb, the president of Curb Records (home to LeAnn Rimes), which relocated here a few years ago from California. Already, there are more than 200 recording studios in the Nashville Yellow Pages, and a greater proportion of them are equipped with top-of-the-line digital equipment than in New York or Los Angeles.

Nashville is also home to more than 80 film and television production companies. Film and video production accounts for another $200 million per year, according to the Nashville Film Office. Five major cable television channels are

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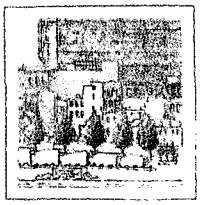
based in Music City, including The Nashville Network (TNN), Country Music Television (CMT), and Trinity Broadcasting, a religious programmer.

As the entrepreneur drives on, he winds past massive warehouses. Here at the crossroads of the country, three interstates converge. Half the U.S. population lives within 600 miles of Nashville—and those people can be reached by a spider's web of rail lines, river routes, and highways that emanate out of Nashville. Small wonder that strategically located Nashville is a major shipping and distribution center for books, Bibles, and manufactured goods—it is the perfect home for a manufacturer's shipping center. That is one reason Ingram Inc., the world's largest distributor of books, has long been based here. Across town is Thomas Nelson, the world's largest publisher of Bibles. Nashville is also home to the world's largest sheet music publishers.

There are more than 200 commercial publishers (printing forms, catalogues, and supermarket coupons) and dozens of other printers who specialize in other niches (everything from sweepstakes mailings to hot rod calendars). If you live in the Southeast, almost everything you read is printed here. The printers and publishers got their start a century ago running off religious tracts and the documents for Nashville's insurance companies and banks, which lie just over the next rise.

The church spires and glass towers of downtown come into view. Here are the investment banks and insurance companies that were known for decades as the "Wall Street of the South." Ten venture capital firms—with a combined investment portfolio worth hundreds of millions—are based in Nashville. Since 1990, J.C. Bradford & Co., Nashville's most prominent investment banking firm, has helped entrepreneurs raise over $12 billion in initial public stock offerings, as well as more than $3 billion in private investments. And enterprises financed in

Richard Miniter writes frequently about business for The American Enterprise, Reader's Digest, *and other national publications.*



Nashville was recently ranked one of the nation's top ten "entrepreneurial hot spots."

Nashville tend to stay there, unlike northeastern firms that tend to migrate as they grow. That means there are hundreds of successful entrepreneurs and investors who are ready to listen to J.C. Bradford & Co. pitch the next big thing and say, "Yeah, put me down for $500,000."

Nashville was recently ranked one of the nation's top ten "entrepreneurial hot spots" in a two-year survey conducted by the Association of Foreign Investors in U.S. Real Estate (AFIRE). With 132 Japanese-owned manufacturing plants, Tennessee has more direct foreign investment than any other non-coastal state—the bulk of it flowing to Nashville.

Nashville's economy is surprisingly large, dynamic, and diverse. More than 40 publicly traded companies are based in Nashville, 20 of which have gone public since 1990. More publicly traded restaurant companies are based here than in any other city on earth. Central Parking Corporation, the nation's largest owner of parking garages, is based here. Health care is a very big part of the Nashville economy. Half the nation's private hospital beds are owned by Nashville companies, and there are more health care management start-ups within 15 miles of Nashville than anywhere in the world.

Nashville has almost no unemployment beyond frictional turnover, and local firms continue to add jobs at a rapid clip. Forty percent of Nashville-area firms surveyed by Manpower, Inc., the temporary placement company, plan to hire more employees in the next three months. That compares to a national average of 25 percent. Incomes are rising, too. While personal income grew 4.1 percent for the nation as whole from 1990-95, pay surged more than 6.7 percent in the Nashville-Davidson County area over the same period. Even during economic downturns, Nashville tends to outperform the state and nation and recover earlier. In short, Nashville is a boom town.

America's current prosperity is largely due to a handful of boom towns like Silicon Valley, Houston, Charlotte, and Nashville. These cities have seen faster than normal growth throughout the last decade. Each prospers not because it has one industry booming, but because the city has become an industry leader in some field like computers, entertainment, banking, or health care, while also being an important regional player in several other industries. Boom towns also have strong financial sectors that advise and nourish young companies, long before they have become profitable and can win a standard bank loan.

Boom towns attract the bright, the ambitious, and the hard-working—today's so-called "knowledge workers." Why? "The key criteria in determining which cities will be most successful in attracting knowledge-based industries are: a qualified [educated] work force, an international airport, a business development culture that welcomes and respects the entrepreneurial spirit, making it easier to open and build offices, and an environment which, essentially, is a nice place to live," said David Birch, president of Cognetics, a Boston-based research group. What all of these factors boil down to is location, investment in education and infrastructure, and friendliness to business activity.

For cities, the investment component is fairly straightforward. Their schools (especially graduate and trade schools) must avoid fads and impart real skills. Nashville does this well. Nashville's 72,000 public school students—almost half of whom are black—concentrate on the basics and score reasonably well on standardized tests. Nashville's public schools have recently focused on instilling a mastery of the "core area" of lan-

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guage skills, mathematics, and science [see the article starting on page 60]. Though Nashville only spends $4,700 per pupil (significantly below the national average of $5,800), the average student scores 544 on the SAT verbal test (well above the national average of 505) and 544 on the SAT math test (compared to the national average of 508).

To attract entrepreneurs, a city's bridges, tunnels, rail lines, ports, and highways must be modern and in good repair. This Nashville also does well, in contrast to Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C.—where highways are uneven, ports are aging and crime-ridden, and the railroad tracks are in such poor repair that freight trains must travel at half speed.

In the Northeast, basic public services have been costly failures for so long that few residents expect good schools or smooth roads. In Nashville, and other boom towns, no one is resigned to thinking that such failure is an unavoidable fact of urban life. They expect a clean, safe, well-run city. The effectiveness of the limited local government, which concentrates mostly on prosaic public services like schools and roads, inspires confidence and optimism. In other words, partly because the local government is *not* ambitious, the people are.

Which leads us to the question of culture. Apart from the efficient exercise of limited government powers, what can cities do to promote a pro-business culture? The attitude policy makers take toward free enterprise is critical.

Tennessee Governor Don Sundquist (R) may not court the national press like some counterparts, but he is much more ambitious and his state is much more successful than Sundquist's modest demeanor indicates. His goal is for Tennessee to have the "lowest per capita taxes in the country" and the "fewest regulations and least amount of paperwork" of any state in the Union. (Tennessee already has no income tax and no capital gains tax.)

Sundquist's first-term record is impressive. He has already reduced the state's small payroll by more than 1,700 people and abolished the state's Public Service Commission, which regulated utility rates. His Families First welfare reform plan has trimmed welfare by about 40 percent [see page 64]. He has announced a plan to privatize all of the state's prisons, a move that would catapult Tennessee ahead of every other state in this area. Though action isn't expected until later this year, prison privatization is expected to end the possibility of early release of criminals due to overcrowding while simultaneously cutting incarceration costs.

The state government does not treat business with hostility or suspicion, but like a partner where both sides are expected to keep their part of the bargain. "In Tennessee, *profit* is a good word. We understand that there are no employees without employers. And there are no employers until somebody risks capital. So we want 'em to make a profit," says Sundquist. Growth doesn't come from government, however wise, but from profit-minded businessmen.

Sundquist is a quiet conservative with a bold agenda. Just how bold was accidentally revealed when the governor's second-term strategic plan was leaked to the *The Tennessean*. The surprisingly detailed plan calls for eliminating 11 of the state government's 22 departments. Sundquist won't discuss the details, but doesn't disavow the plan. How many state employee jobs would the strategic plan eliminate? I ask. "Do you think I got into politics yesterday?" he says, with a cagey smile.

Governor Sundquist embodies the state's political outlook: a calm, business-like focus on results. "We have a tradition in Tennessee of less government," Sundquist says. He understands that budget cuts can be popular, especially when they free up funds to provide things the public demands: new roads, better schools, even Internet access and bike trails. He realizes that many government programs have only the slenderest of constituencies, and often no real beneficiaries.

Effective and unobtrusive government, producing low taxes and minimal red tape, is a big part of Nashville's success. The central location and moderate climate help. The reliable workforce and lack of militant unions (Tennessee is a right-to-work state) are critical. But other things also set Nashville apart—particularly the ways people think about risk, openness, and failure.

Risk. "Rich people in this part of the country are willing to spin the big wheel a few more times, rather than clip [bond] coupons," says Andrew May, director of research at J.C. Bradford & Co., the large Nashville investment bank. Investors here understand that most start-ups will go under. Perhaps six out of ten fail, says May, and another three limp along. But the tenth one will blaze to the top, leaving fantastic earnings in its wake. Meanwhile, in some cities, investors are looking for guarantees, a sure thing.

Because Nashville investors actually seek out entrepreneurial opportunities, talented executives with bold plans have little problem raising funds here. In health care management, for instance, scores of highly innovative companies have recently been launched in Nashville. "The V.C. [venture capitalists] parachute in from 30,000 feet and try to rope and tie 'em," says May.

Openness. "Nashville is a creative bastion," says Tim Wipperman, senior vice president of Warner/Chappell Music Publishers, one of the industry's largest. Here a doorman at the Hermitage Hotel can tell a guest that he is a songwriter and receive a serious hearing from the visiting music promoter, who hands over his card, with a home number scrawled on the back, saying, "We'll talk," as he steps out into the afternoon sun. Nashville is a try-it-and-see-if-it-works town, not a let's-go-check-with-the-authorities town.

This openness to new possibilities is evident even in a highly technical, rule-bound field like medicine. Bill Frist, the renowned Nashville organ transplant surgeon who now represents Tennessee in the U.S. Senate as a Republican, told TAE: "I was at Massachusetts General [hospital] in Boston, and things there were rigid. Nashville is different. I started a heart-lung transplant center at Vanderbilt [University Medical Center] in just a

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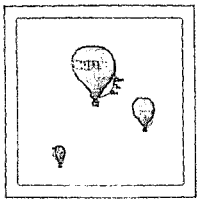
few months, which would have been impossible in most places."

Another Nashville entrepreneur with an open and creative mind is Dr. Roberts Crants. One-quarter Seneca Indian, Crants attended West Point because he couldn't afford to pay for college tuition. After graduation he married his high school sweetheart, saw combat in Vietnam, and earned an MBA and law degree. Then he moved to Nashville. He found money to start a successful cable television business. Then in 1983, Tom Beasley, his best friend and West Point roommate, walked into his office with a proposition. "Why don't we privatize the county jail?"

No one had ever tried that before. Crants sold his television stations and started, with Beasley, the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA). Today CCA is the nation's sixth largest operator of prisons, behind only the federal government and four states. Its 1996 revenues topped $290 million and *Fortune* named the firm one of the nation's 100 fastest growing enterprises.

Private prisons have become a big business. In 26 states and the District of Columbia, more than 150 private prisons are in operation or under construction. CCA can build a prison cheaper and faster than state governments can, and because of careful design and hiring they are able to make a profit while charging 20 percent less than typical government operating costs. Local communities like private prisons because they create jobs and because they pay a form of property tax, which state prisons do not. The facilities are more modern, the repairs are rapid, and CCA has a powerful financial incentive to treat prisoners well—unlike state prisons, private prisons can be liable for cash awards in inmate lawsuits. CCA 's success has spawned an entire industry that now includes more than 18 competing firms.

Failure. One sign of Nashville's health is that its businesses and government agencies do fail and close down. Failure is an important part of the learning process; it sorts successful approaches from losing ones. Failure also makes change possible. Without failure, established companies are not forced to accept the painful processes of improvement.



Local government concentrates mostly on prosaic public services like schools and roads. Partly because the government is *not* ambitious, the people are.

Rigid cultures abhor failure and try desperately to avoid it. But as any economist will tell you, the ideal number of business failures is not zero. Banishing failure means avoiding risks and the trials and errors which yield new ideas. When governments refuse to allow institutions to fail, author Jonathan Rauch points out, they "become like an automobile manufacturer that keeps every car it has ever made on the market."

One important measure of a boom town, then, is what happens to innovators who flop, even go bankrupt. In an entrepreneurial culture like Nashville's, business failure is not a kiss of death, as it can be in more rigid economies. Nashville investors, bankers, lawyers, and accountants expect some new ventures to fail—and also expect that failure to be followed by new efforts.

Enter the mind of a typical Nashville entrepreneur. You have safe middle-class parents. You went to a nearby state school. You earned a degree in some practical field like accounting or hospital administration. Later, perhaps, you passed the bar exam or aced the accounting certification test. Then you spent the next ten or 15 years climbing the ladder at a growing but hardly glamorous company, where you focused on the details that bored others. You kept working until after your co-workers had gone home, because you decided there had to be a better, faster, or cheaper way to do things—and you wanted to put yourself in a place where you could find out if you were right. So you drafted a business plan and assembled a team of hard-working go-getters like yourself. Now you're ready to change some facet of your industry and become another reason for competing managers in places like Reno or St. Cloud to turn their worried eyes to Nashville and say, "What next?"

So you take your business plan and your seasoned team downtown to meet the venture capitalists. You show them the pie charts and explain how your company will buy and consolidate radiology labs, or better manage a chain of rural clinics, or whatever. You'll cut costs by sharing equipment, making bulk purchases of supplies, and centralizing the back office work: accounting, legal, purchasing, and human resources. One investor points out that you failed last time, costing them a bundle. The wealthiest man at the table notes that several of his first companies failed. The others smile and say they'll get back to you. You know you'll get your money.

At each step of the way it was the attitudes of the entrepreneur and those around him that made the eventual business venture possible. People, even more than policies or business climates, nourish boom towns. The entrepreneurs now enriching Nashville use few natural resources; they need only brain power and money, two of the most mobile assets in the modern world. So why are they here? Because other creative types are here, and because they feel free here. "The continued growth of Nashville is assured by the fact that a lot of people are making Nashville a lifestyle choice," says Tim DuBois, president of Arista Records.

Lifestyle. It's another word for culture. They come for the culture. And they leave—from Nashville or any other city—when the culture becomes unfriendly.

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Yankee Mayors, Dial-up Governors, and Al Gore the Strip-miner...

A Waltz Through Tennessee Politics

By Bill Kauffman

"The mayor of Nashville being an Upstate New Yorker who went to Harvard—this would have been impossible to imagine 30 years ago," says Nashville-based book publisher John S. Sanders. ▪ Mayor Phil Bredesen is indeed a stark example of the transformation of Southern politics. A mix of Yorker and Yankee, founder of an HMO management firm, Mayor Bredesen affects no fake southern drawl: he offers coffee to you, not y'all. The language he speaks is that of the deal: he says things like, "We just put ourselves in play. People became aware that Nashville is willing to sit down and deal."

Bredesen styles himself a "conservative Democrat." M. Lee Smith, publisher of the inside-politics *Tennessee Journal,* reckons the second-term mayor a "business-oriented progressive. He loves the big deals: building the arena, getting the Oilers here." Chores such as "getting Aunt Susie's sidewalk fixed" are of less urgency. Despite its sequined image, Nashville is a city of trade and commerce, *à la* Atlanta and Charlotte. It is also capital of perhaps the most aggressively pro-business state in the union; so Phil Bredesen, melodious Upstate accent aside, seems a perfect fit.

The "carpetbagger" charge, with its echoes of Reconstruction, has lost its sting. "When I think of the political and business and non-profit leaders, half of them are from California and New York, Michigan and Florida," says Bredesen, who adds that "it'll be a long time before a Tennessean is mayor of New York."

Bud Adams, owner of the Tennessee Oilers (who came to town carrying the carpetbag to end all carpetbags), says, "Phil Bredesen is a smart man, a businessman. But I don't think he's seen too many football games, if you know what I mean."

So what did you expect: Mayor Willie Nelson?

Nashville is not Hollywood. Country music people play little role in Tennessee politics: there are no bumptious Barbra Streisands on Music Row. Roy Acuff did run for governor as a Republican in 1948, drawing record crowds, but most of his admirers came to hear the Smoky Mountain Boys play "Wabash Cannonball" rather than to listen to Roy read, verbatim, his ghosted speeches featuring such stumpers as "an ostrich who sticks his head in the sand and thinks he is hid can lose a lot of tail feathers!" Acuff pledged himself to the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, and the TVA. He asked listeners to "vote for the man with the fiddle," but he lost by a two-to-one margin—which was pretty darn good for a Republican in 1948.

The only other Nashville celebrity to run for office was Tex Ritter, singer of "High Noon" and progenitor of the rubber-limbed actor John. The cerebral Ritter, certainly the only southern candidate ever to praise Eldridge Cleaver's prose style during a campaign, ran as the moderate alternative to candy-heir William Brock in the 1970 Republican Senate primary. Like the little chocolate shells in Brock's factories, Ritter got creamed.

Former governor Lamar Alexander (favorite singer: Eddy Arnold) guesses that as "country music goes on television, we'll have more candidates for office." He notes that what "helps Hollywood actors in politics is their training: they're more appealing visually, they know how to move and talk and look at the camera. Most people in country music started out as songwriters." Until the recent profu-

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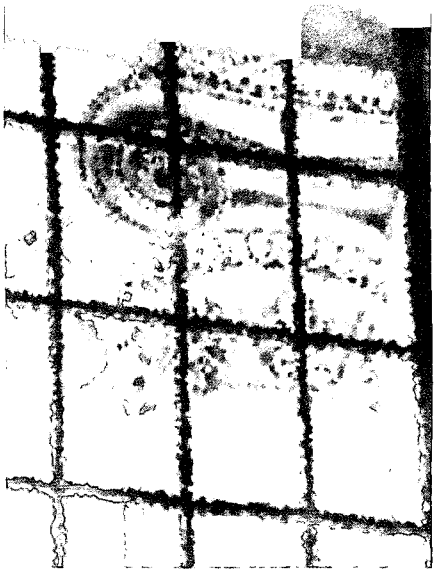
sion of male models in cowboy hats, Nashville's stars were both more literate and less photogenic than their Hollywood counterparts. Waylon Jennings may be smarter than Alec Baldwin and a boon party companion to boot, but he looks more like a candidate's reprobate brother than a candidate.

Mayor Bredesen (favorites: "cross-over music—Vince Gill, Garth Brooks") says that "for business CEOs who wanted to play on the national stage, [country music] was an embarrassment. People thought we all had guitars and bare feet: 'Hee Haw' was the vision. Of course it's a very sophisticated industry with very sophisticated executives. I've tried to bridge those gaps. We've asked country music people to be on boards and commissions."

My, how times do change. John Seigenthaler, the retired former editor of the *Tennessean*, remarks that years ago, "the idea that anybody in the music industry would be part of the Chamber of Commerce was so far-fetched it was laughable. Hank Williams would set himself on fire in some fleabag, drunk, or Webb Pierce would be arrested for trying to fight his way into some woman wrestler's dressing room."

Until the 1960s, road signs welcomed travelers to the "Three Great States of Tennessee." Topography and soil dictated politics: there was Andrew Johnson's mountainous east, a Republican redoubt; and the Democratic domains of the West, with its cotton lands and the fertile Central Basin, of which Nashville is the dimple.

The state remains tripartite, though mobility has had its usual homogenizing effect. Just as it is no longer unthinkable that a New Yorker can be mayor of Nashville, neither is a Republican statewide office-holder a freak. "When I was a young reporter, there was no Republican election outside a couple districts in East Tennessee," says John Seigenthaler. Yet today, the governor, Illinois-born Don Sundquist, is a Republican, as are Senators Fred Thompson and Bill Frist, both swept in on the 1994 GOP wave.



A view from inside the Tennessee state capitol.

"I used to say that, all things being equal, the Democrats were going to win a statewide election. Now it's pretty close to a push," says M. Lee Smith, who ascribes the new parity to two changes. First, beginning in the 1960s, conservative West Tennessee Democrats abandoned the party of their ancestors, "largely as a reaction to the civil-rights movement." More recently, the prosperous suburbs of Nashville have become solidly—and generously—Republican. (In 1996, two of the five most lucrative GOP fund-raising zip codes in the nation were within Davidson County.)

Lamar Alexander, whom Smith describes as a "classic East Tennessee Republican," points out that Tennessee was "the [Southern] state where Ronald Reagan got his lowest percentage. The conservative movement that swept across the South with Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan had less of an effect here." The hoary Republicanism of East Tennessee is distinctly moderate; any rightward tug on the party has come from the Nashville suburbs or the erstwhile Democrats of the West.

Alexander emphasizes his state's typicality: "Tennessee's culture, mores, attitudes, are pretty much Middle America. The number-one *Billboard* artist isn't a rap musician, it isn't music out of Hollywood or New York, it's LeAnn Rimes out of Nashville. The most Bibles are sold out of here at a time of religious awakening. We're the prime spot for Japanese companies to come in America."

With three potential presidential candidates in 2000 (Alexander, Fred Thompson, and Al Gore), it also has become a prime spot for ambitious politicians. Bruce Dobie, editor of the weekly *Nashville Scene,* has a theory about that: "We're not Deep South; there are no elements of radicalism. As you move north into Tennessee or Kentucky, you find southern charm or grace, which embrace certain political skills—compromise, amiability. Move north into the Midwest and it's boring and charmless."

Tennessee touches more states (eight) than any other member of the Union; outsiders, whether Carolina lawyers or Japanese companies, have fared well here. Nashville has become "cosmopolitan," says Mayor Bredesen. As illustration, Lamar Alexander says, "You can buy country hams, but you can also get good sushi here."

Not all Tennesseans have bought into this vision of the abundant life. The Vanderbilt-centered authors of *I'll Take My Stand* asked in 1930, "How may the little agrarian community resist the Chamber of Commerce...which is always trying to import some foreign industry that cannot be assimilated into the life-pattern of the community?" In an age of Nissan and the Oilers, it is a question that is asked less and less.

The Jacksonian populist tradition in Tennessee is moribund, if not dead. The remaining populist Democrats "are all in their eighties and dying out," says Vanderbilt historian Paul K. Conkin. "They are as irrelevant as latter-day agrarians." And besides, says Bruce Dobie, when semi-populists achieve power they become "biz-pigs helping established big businesses."

This is not to say that modest beginnings do not carry political cachet. The state's two Republican presidential hopefuls, Lamar Alexander and Fred Thompson, emphasize their salt-of-the-earth upbringings, though not so baldly as did Andrew Johnson, who, fortified by brandy, slurred at his Vice-Presidential inauguration in March 1865, "I am going to tell the truth here today, and that is, I am a plebeian—and I thank God for it!"

TAE associate editor Bill Kauffman is the author of Every Man A King, Country Towns of New York, America First!, *and the forthcoming* With Good Intentions? Reflections on the Myth of Progress in America.

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Vice President Albert Gore, Jr., raised in the Fairfax Hotel in Washington, D.C., can make no Johnsonian boast. "His familiarity with Tennessee is as slender as his southern accent," says John Sanders, although the younger Gore did spend four and a half years with *The Tennessean.* His big story, an investigation exposing the sale of zoning variances, had a "cleansing effect" on Nashville government, according to John Seigenthaler, who hired Gore.

The real Tennessean was the Vice President's father, Albert Gore, Sr. In political mythology, the senior Gore was the "dirt farmer's son" who "was one of the chief advocates of the little man against the big interests" until he was defeated for re-election in 1970 in a race-baiting campaign by William Brock. Gore Sr.'s descendants won't be doing any dirt farming, however, and that is largely thanks to his willingness, during his long House and Senate career, to carry water for the infamous Armand Hammer—Lenin's capitalist, the head of Occidental Petroleum, and a liar and briber of Stakhanovite proportions.

Senator Gore intervened on Hammer's behalf with President Kennedy, Soviet ministers, and cabinet members. He escorted Hammer to five presidential inaugurations before handing off the winner of the Lenin Order of Friendship Among the Peoples to son Albert for the 1981 inauguration of Reagan. Gore Sr.'s deeds did not go unrewarded: in 1950 the then-congressman was rewarded with a profitable partnership in a Hammer cattle-breeding business. (Gore's heavy labor for Hammer is detailed in Edward Jay Epstein's *Dossier.*)

After losing his Senate seat, Gore Sr. really hit the Hammer jackpot. He was named chairman of Island Creek Coal, the nation's third-largest coal producer, which Occidental Petroleum had acquired in 1968. The fighter for the little guy was making in excess of $500,000 a year—somewhat out of the populist neighborhood.

And just what did Island Creek do? Strip-mine Kentucky, for one thing. John S. Sanders, scion of a family that owned two newspapers in Lexington, Kentucky, says, "Island Creek was a strip-mining company. Even at that time strip-mining was deplored as an assault on the environment. Ex-Senator Gore apparently had no difficulties with that—nor has his son." (The Vice President and/or his ghostwriter was prudentially silent about strip-mining in his best-selling *Earth in the Balance.*)

"The difference between us and the federal government is we're doing what we said we would do. The federal government talks about it."

—Governor Don Sundquist

As usual, the tabby cats of the elite press overlooked this story: the excavation was done by Bob Holladay of *The Williamson Leader*, a small weekly in Franklin, Tennessee. Island Creek was repeatedly cited for strip-mining violations during the years (1973-83) when the senior Gore was chairman. A spokeswoman for the Kentucky Division of Water Pollution called Island Creek a "major" polluter.

And so we are treated to the delicious irony that the family fortune of Washington's most prominent environmentalist was made by raping Kentucky and servicing Armand Hammer.

Gore Sr. also figures in the Vice President's strange boast that he and his wife served as models for the preppie Oliver Barrett IV and his plucky but doomed spouse in Erich Segal's *Love Story.* (It may be coincidence, but Barrett IV's mother is nicknamed "Tipsy.") Novelist Segal gently corrected the Vice President's misconception, though the author did allow that Gore's relationship with his father inspired Oliver Barrett IV's loathing of Oliver Barrett III. Young Oliver detests his father; he calls him "Old Stonyface," a loveless man who is "all form and no content."

Gore Jr.—Young Stonyface, we presume—"learned some lessons" from his dad's mistakes, says M. Lee Smith. "You can have a fairly liberal voting record, but you've got to keep yourself from getting separated from your constituents on the gut issues. Gore Jr. had a fairly liberal voting record but on the big issues he was careful not to get polarized. His dad was hurt by the race issue, by Vietnam, by school prayer. To Gore Sr.'s credit, he was probably more right than wrong [on race]."

Lamar Alexander, back for seconds after a failed 1996 presidential bid, currently works out of an office on Nashville's Music Row. Glen Campbell is next door, but the sartorial flavor of the neighborhood looks to be more Brooks Brothers than rhinestone cowboy. Morning copies of the *Wall Street Journal* rest in front of many of the bungalows stretching along this fabled boulevard.

Alexander is a seventh-generation Tennessean; he remarks that his ancestors "got here in the 1780s, before it was a state." He was an activist governor who sharply increased state spending on schools. This followed the tradition of Andrew Johnson, who as governor in 1854 successfully lobbied for the funding of public education through direct taxation.

At Vanderbilt, Alexander was a student of novelist Walter Sullivan, another native son. Sullivan was born in Nashville, educated at Vanderbilt, and has taught at the Commodore's university since 1949. Says Sullivan, a friend and admirer of Alexander, "I recall it was about time for Lamar to graduate and I said, 'Well, Lamar, what are you going to do now?' He said, 'I'm going to be governor of Tennessee.'"

Abraham Lincoln's law partner once said of him: "His ambition was a little engine that knew no rest." Is Alexander Lincolnesque? He denies it: "I went to NYU for law school. Greenwich Village is not the place to go for a Tennessean who wants to be governor."

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Alexander's fantastically profitable investments came under scrutiny in 1996. Strangely, conservatives made little of his vice chairmanship of Corporate Family Solutions, Inc., which he co-founded in 1987. The company operates 95 "child-development centers," providing daycare for the employees of such corporations as Boeing. I asked the governor about this:

TAE: Is the pervasiveness of dual-earner couples something that we should deplore?
ALEXANDER: It's better if a very young child has a parent at home. I even think it's better for the mother, as between the two parents, to be at home in the earliest months.
TAE: Months or years?
ALEXANDER: The earliest months make the greatest difference. But today, we have 75 percent of women who work away from home.
TAE: Yeah, but many of those are part-time. A woman who puts her five-month old in all-day daycare: this is negligent, isn't it?
ALEXANDER: No, it's not negligent, not unless you want to say that millions of women are negligent. Of all the options available in that real-life situation, work-site care is best because it helps a working parent remain as attached as possible to a child. It's the same kind of help that a babysitter at home would be: women working at home don't spend every single moment with their child. The workplace becomes a new American neighborhood, in a sense, where you provide the kind of support that neighbors have traditionally given in the care of children.

Alexander says he is "likely to run" in 2000.

The third potential Tennessean in the race, Senator Fred Thompson, might have been the first-ever presidential candidate to have uttered the f-word in a Hollywood motion picture. But after his fizzle at the Senate campaign-finance-scandal hearings he seems unlikely to run. A 55-year-old divorcé, Thompson is a fixture in the Nashville gossip pages, as he squires around women who are, well, not 55. Country music vixen Lorrie Morgan, the Liz Taylor of Nashville (who is on her fourth husband and counting), writes of her former swain Senator Thompson in her new memoir (wittily titled *Forever Yours, Faithfully*): "Fred is an extremely generous man. He wined and dined me and bought me presents—furs, earrings, Chanel shoes with real high heels." But ultimately, "he could not accept me as I am."

While *TAE* was invading Tennessee, University of Tennessee quarterback Peyton Manning lost the Heisman Trophy to University of Michigan defensive back Charles Woodson. Volunteer fans, Governor Don Sundquist included, protested. Big deal: the most deserving candidate seldom wins the Heisman. But Manning is white and Woodson is black, and so it happened that the executive director of the Nashville NAACP denounced Sundquist for using a poisonously racist locution to describe Woodson. The governor's hate crime? He called Woodson "this guy from Michigan."

Sundquist was in high dudgeon when we chatted: "I'm sick and tired of everybody twisting every answer into a racist question."

If this was a vexing matter—and what politico wouldn't love the chance to defend the honor of his state's most popular athlete?—it was one of very few irritants in what has been a smooth first term. The governor has $4.5 million to spend on a 1998 re-election bid and no Democratic foe in sight. (In 1994, Sundquist defeated Mayor Bredesen, who spent $6 million of his own fortune in the governor's race.)

A former six-term congressman from West Tennessee, Sundquist declares, "the difference between us and the federal government is we're doing what we said we would do. The federal government talks about it." One thing he has done is hold the line on taxes. Tennessee remains one of seven states without an income tax, depending instead on a sales tax. Advocacy of a statewide income tax is akin to opining that Peyton Manning is an overrated quarterback who will flop in the pros.

Despite his midwestern roots, Sundquist speaks the language of the business-oriented New South. In our interview, he points out that Tennessee is "first" or "best" in several categories: "highest percentage of people with some form of health-care insurance"; "first state to have the Internet in every public school and library"; "more foreign companies than any other state that's not on an ocean or a Great Lake." Summing it up, he says, "In Tennessee, *profit* is a good word."

There is a duality in Sundquist. His themes include both balanced-budget Republicanism and Gingrich-Kemp-style activism. His second-term agenda, as outlined in our interview, has a fairly radical tincture: he hopes to halve the number of state departments (currently 22) and make Tennessee the state with "the lowest taxes, fewest regulations, and least paperwork" in the country.

Yet he is also fluent in Gingrich-speak: he frequently calls for "offensive government" (as in "designed for attack," not "disagreeable to the senses") and is proud that state spending on K-12 education has risen by $1 billion over the last six years.

Governor Sundquist attributes the state's congenial political climate to its casualness. Legislators serve part-time (sessions do not exceed 90 days) and are paid $16,000 annually. Sundquist must be almost the only governor in the land whose home phone is listed in the book; he says he's not pestered by cranks.

For good or ill, cranks are in short supply in Tennessee politics. As one ex-Tennessean says of his state's practicality, "Tennessee's motto is 'Agriculture and Commerce.' How inspiring. Can you imagine Davy Crockett yelling, 'Agriculture and Commerce!' at the Alamo?"

Then again, after Crockett lost his bid to be re-elected to the House of Representatives, he told his Tennessee constituents, "You can go to Hell. I'm going to Texas." Most Tennesseans stayed put, and as stay-putters everywhere know, home—good old Rocky Top, Tennessee—is the best place to be.

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The Land Where Religion Is Hip

By Scott Walter

The rock group Jars of Clay

© Barry King '96 Gamma-Liaison

Unless you've driven down one of Nashville's seemingly endless streets of churches trying to find the one with the Christian ballet while your car radio is tuned to a Christian rock station, you just haven't had the Nashville religious experience. ■ Wherever one goes in the city, religious life is never far from the surface. Land at Nashville International Airport and discover that its facilities include a "meditation room," complete with couch, kneeler, and Bible. Visit the Ryman Auditorium, original home of the Grand Ole Opry, and you quickly learn that the famous hall was originally built as the Union Gospel Tabernacle, a function that continued even as it gained fame for its non-Sabbath performances. Even today, the Ryman will feature a rockabilly concert on a Saturday night and also host 1,000 men for a 5:00 A.M. prayer meeting, as well as a concert of twelfth-century polyphony by St. Hildegard von Bingen.

Go to the new home of the Opry, and on the bulletin board backstage you'll find notices of church benefit concerts, as well as a handwritten note by a member of the Opry family who asks friends to pray for her son Jarrett, who's steaming on the *U.S.S. George Washington* to the turbulent Gulf. Just read the other articles in this issue and you'll see that in Nashville, religion affects everything from restaurants to giant auto factories.

Even the free weekly *Nashville Scene* features classified ads not just for escort services but also, under "Musicians Wanted," for things like this: "Attention Serious Christian Musicians: Forming band w/tight grooves, even tighter harmonies. I need guys who can play/sing and most importantly love Jesus."

The extraordinary range of religious endeavor in the city quickly astonishes an observer from the relatively unchurched Northeast. Nashville boasts Christian dancers, Christian clown troupes, Christian business circles, Christian rockers, Christian publishing companies, Christian museums. Many of the churches themselves sport everything from vast high-tech worship halls, to bookstores, to energetic counseling services, to Bible lost-and-found departments.

Nor is Nashville religion restricted to right-wing evangelical Protestantism. The Roman Catholic cathedral, near Vanderbilt, has standing-room-only crowds on Sunday, while in the Episcopalian cathedral's parking lot one can see Toyotas with gay pride bumper stickers. Traveling west of downtown, one comes across a fresh yuppie townhouse development that looks across the highway to one of America's largest Hindu temples (the five priests there point with pride to one of the grandest idols of Sri Ganesha on the continent). The Mormons of Nashville are also trying to build a temple, though this does seem to be testing the limits of some citizens' ecumenism. And at a Reformed Jewish establishment known as "The Temple," Debbie Friedman can be heard performing "Jewish folk-rock."

Nashville's religious works range as much in size as flavor: a half-dozen friends in a living-room Bible study

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group; a newborn congregation meeting in a borrowed gym; a "megachurch" like Two Rivers Baptist, whose mall-like complex accommodates thousands, broadcasting over television to thousands more.

In many ways Nashville is the white-hot heart of what some have dubbed the "Christian alternative universe," a cultural movement that, inspired by faith, produces everything from marital counseling to gift wrap to computer software, reaching tens of millions of believers in America and around the world. The city is home to the headquarters of numerous organizations, including the United Methodists and their $100 million publishing arm; the National Baptist Convention USA ("the largest African-American organization in the world"); the Gideons of hotel Bible fame; the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, the world's largest distributor of religious products and services; and Thomas Nelson, the world's largest Bible publisher. The Church of Christ denomination, though technically without a central headquarters, also calls Nashville home, as does the Gospel Music Association, trade group for the half-billion-dollar industry.

To glimpse how Nashville's everyday religiosity ends up causing ripples around the world, consider the story of two junior high school girls at Tulip Grove Baptist Church. In 1993 they told their youth minister, Richard Ross, "You have no idea how stupid we feel being the only virgins in junior high." Knowing that they were mistaken about the rarity of their self-restraint, Ross tried to imagine how to encourage the girls—and their peers around the country—and convince them they were not alone. Since he also worked as a consultant to the Baptist Sunday School Board downtown, he concocted the idea of first having kids across America sign cards promising to remain sexually pure until marriage, and then displaying the cards at a Southern Baptist Convention meeting. This idea became "True Love Waits,"

Scott Walter is senior editor of The American Enterprise.

Nashville is the white-hot heart of what some have dubbed the "Christian alternative universe."

and by the next year Washington, D.C., saw over 210,000 covenant cards planted on the Mall.

Still going strong, the True Love Waits crusade has spread to numerous other spheres, Protestant, Catholic, and secular. For 1998, the goal is to display Commitment Cards at every secondary school in America. Already, rallies have been held in held in Ottawa, Ontario; Kampala, Uganda; and Buenos Aires, Argentina. A 1996 rally in Atlanta displayed 350,000 signed cards from all 50 states and 76 countries.

At True Love Waits' ground-zero in Nashville, the Sunday School Board has hot lines for groups seeking planning kits in English, French, and Spanish, as well as banners, T-shirts, and related materials that feature graphics slick enough to have been produced by Pepsi's ad agency. The campaign's effort to build confidence seems to be succeeding. Christian musician Geoff Moore declares that "True Love Waits is about raising standards and having young people take a stand not only for abstinence but also for truth." Entertainer Lakitha Garth, spokeswoman for Athletes for Abstinence, concurs: "There is no condom that can protect you from a broken heart and a shattered dream." Even President Clinton has met with the group and admitted that governmental efforts can't solve the problems True Love Waits is battling. (He ought to know.) The real answer, Ross says the President told him, is "for individual teenagers to choose not to have sex out of their own internal sense of morality."

Those slick graphics at True Love Waits are the first clue that this is not your father's Protestant South. The Northeastern elite has long seen the nation's most religious region as "The Sahara of the Bozart," in H. L. Mencken's waspish phrase. As recently as 1993, the *Washington Post* thought nothing of running an article that described religious Americans as "largely poor, uneducated, and easy to command."

The *Post* should get out more, Nashvillians chuckle in reply. They know their credentials don't lack for sophistication. That Christian ballet company, for example, has as its nucleus three former professional dancers from the Cincinnati Ballet Company, two of whom have taught dance at the university level. The artistic director's wife is now school director for the Nashville Ballet, and the artistic director himself has three times received the Master Choreographer's Grant from the Indiana Arts Commission (a recipient of National Endowment for the Arts funding).

The executive director of Hosanna Sacred Arts, Michael Cadle, chatted with me as he ran the control booth in the Christ Presbyterian Church sanctuary for a dress rehearsal of the group's *Songs of the Nativity* ballet. A cellular phone lay on the 32-channel Yamaha soundboard in front of him. Nearby were a 24-channel Yamaha soundboard and a 125-channel computer-controlled light system. On the stage, attractive, classically trained dancers were running through routines with Kenneth Tolle, the artistic director, who looked like a typical professional dancer: black sweats, white leggings, blonde ponytail and goatee. Then one notices his wedding ring, and in front of the stage, a playpen with children being cared for by dancers not needed in the current number.

Yet the scene is no more unusual than, say, going to a concert by rock superstar Sting and discovering that the opening act, Jars of Clay, is singing a song whose chorus chants "Jesus!" repeatedly. Or tuning into a radio station that sounds like the typical city's alternative-rock outlet, featuring bands with names like Zombie and Audio Adrenaline, and then noticing that the lyrics proclaim, "I'm an original species, more enlightened than Nietzsche…I am loved by the Maker who's clever / I was made to live forever."

Over at the Southern Baptist headquarters, the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission speaks out forcefully on po-

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litical issues, but its director, Richard Land, doesn't have a degree from Hee Haw Bible College—he went to Princeton on a full academic scholarship before heading on to Oxford for his doctorate. "My enemies can say I'm wrong, but they can't say I'm stupid," he laughs.

Another stereotype that erodes under scrutiny is the notion that the South's Christians are narrow sectarians, with Methodists turning up their nose at Baptists, neither speaking to the Catholics, and Jews constantly fearful of violence from their neighbors. In fact, many of the largest churches either lack a denominational affiliation or, if they have one, downplay it in their name and literature. The Hosanna dancers, for instance, include Presbyterians, Baptists, and Catholics, choreographed by a Romanian Orthodox.

"Was Jesus a Baptist or a Methodist?" quips the communications director at Thomas Nelson, who goes on to ask, "Was He a Democrat or Republican?" Though run by a Lebanese evangelical Protestant, the company's catalogue opens with pages of Bibles designed for Catholics, and hardly a denomination or church goes unrepresented among its 1,300 employees, who include Orthodox Jewish salesmen.

Similarly, an evangelical store sells an expensive picturebook of Mother Teresa produced by a Catholic publisher. The cover shows the nun in her habit, holding a rosary. At the Baptist Bookstore, patrons can pick up a volume of basic Christian apologetics co-written by a Jesuit priest.

"The walls are coming down. There's unbelievable unity" among Nashville's churches, says Stephen Allen, pastor of the Oak Hill Assembly of God church, whose pastoral staff includes the father of Gary Chapman, husband and collaborator of gospel music star Amy Grant. Allen may overstate the situation a bit, but such forces as the boundary-breaching music made by artists like Grant—and the hostility that believers of all stripes feel from America's secular elites—do seem to be drawing people of faith toward a unity that hasn't been seen before.

"But surely," a skeptic may say, "these people don't really believe people of other races are their brothers and sisters, and that Jesus called them to serve the poor." Not quite. While it's true that most Nashville churches have a comfortable majority of one race, persons in the minority don't seem to feel out of place. And the races mix freely at places like the Baptist Bookstore on Broadway. On a given day, one-third of the customers there may be black—higher than the percentage in the population at large—and customers purchase gospel music of

TALK ABOUT "LOVE THY NEIGHBOR"...

THE ORTHODOX JEWISH SYNAGOGUE THAT RABBI ZALMAN POSNER has headed for nearly 50 years in Nashville is across the street from a Methodist church, squeezed between the West End Church of Christ on one side and the Free Will Baptist Bible College on the other. Posner is a popular guest speaker for those institutions, and though he's not exactly preaching to the choir, he says the Christians receive him warmly, recognizing that "their religion is an outgrowth of the Jewish religion." He's usually asked what first-century Judaism was like and, he adds with a shrug, "Why aren't Jews Christian?"

Many Jewish leaders would cite the latter question as evidence that conservative Christians pose a dire threat to the Jewish community because they are determined to impose their religious beliefs on others. But smack in the heart of Baptist country, his venerable synagogue literally surrounded by Christians, Rabbi Posner feels anything but besieged.

With his *tallit katan* tucked neatly into his gray striped business suit, the rabbi is, in many respects, just another member of the Nashville community—serving on government commissions in between running his *shul*. Members of his flock rank among the Nashville elite. Posner praises the city highly, and at a moment's notice can slip into a Southern accent so realistic that if you drop your eyes and ignore the black hat on his table, it's possible to believe you're chewing the fat with a local country boy.

Posner says that in his half-century as its leader, Congregation Sherith Israel has never been defaced—and that he hasn't heard a single anti-Semitic remark from a Nashvillian. Indeed, the rabbi praises the town for its courtesy, recalling, for example, the time he entered a courtroom and the judge quickly instructed the bailiff "get a chair for the rabbi."

Other times, he's treated like something of a curiosity. The owner of a bushy gray beard that practically covers his tie when he sits behind his desk, Posner recalls a morning visit to a congregant who ran a liquor store. In walked a man who could charitably be described as having gotten an early start on the day.

"What's with them whiskers?" the tipsy man asked suspiciously.

"Ever hear of a rugged individual—somebody who doesn't give a damn what anyone thinks?" Posner parried. "That's me."

The drunkard thought for a moment. "Mister, I wanna shake your hand. I still don't like them whiskers, but I like your philosophy."

In many ways, it's the philosophy that Posner has followed since he arrived in Nashville in 1949. A member of the Brooklyn-based Lubavitch movement, an ultra-Orthodox Jewish sect that accords its leaders or rebbes near mystical status, Posner's local congregation is simply Orthodox. It offers an unadulterated brand of classical Judaism quite different from what the Jews who drift into Nashville's two large Reform *shuls* hear.

Back in 1954, Posner started a Jewish day school. Today the Akiva School offers its 80 students a rigorous explication of Jewish texts, in addition to traditional academic subjects. Casting a jaundiced eye on the effort in many public schools to boost the "self-esteem" of students, Posner says that the Akiva School asks not "how do you feel?" but "what do you know?"

"I taught a Talmud class to the fifth grade and sixth grade; what you have there is an intellectual adventure. The next time they will encounter this kind of give-and-take argument, counterargument, and refutation will probably be in law school, not before. By the second grade these children are studying Bible in the original Hebrew, not a dumbed-down child's version."

Posner's congregants have included local business leaders and top Vanderbilt administrators and professors. Many members eventually move to other towns, but Posner is proud of his dispersed alums. "They are like salt flavoring their new communities."

Kosher salt, of course.

—Evan Gahr

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all types by black and white performers alike. Just north of the city, the Trinity Broadcast Network's bookstore has items like *Loose That Man and Let Him Go!*, written by T. D. Jakes, a black pastor in Charleston, West Virginia, and endorsed by Promise Keepers co-founder Bill McCartney.

In the James A. Cayce Homes, the city's largest and oldest public housing project, the residents are forming a new church with the Reverend. Andrew Lee Stephens, Jr. Sponsorship is coming from local Presbyterians, but Stephens, who is black, says, "It happens that Presbyterians have taken the initiative in this, but Presbyterianism is not so important. Presbyterians affirm the one body of Christ that includes all the others."

Down on Music Row, the well-known Belmont Church, which numbers many area musicians among its members, has just bought a bus set up to minister especially to the urban poor by providing food, health care, job counseling, and other services. In conjunction with this "Isaiah 58" bus, the church's leaders also pulled a prank on their own congregation: One Sunday morning a man dressed like a homeless person stood up in the middle of a service and began shouting, "I'm not welcome here! You say you love Jesus, but you don't love people like me!" Startled worshipers moved to bring the hysteric under control—until the pastor revealed that the man was a plant. "As we work at serious outreach to the poor, it's going to bust us out of our ways," the pastor explained, "we're going to have scenes like this. We've all got to get used to new things happening here as we reach out. We're going to press in on darkness, which will cause our own hearts to be pricked."

In the hallways of Belmont Church, reports are posted from missionaries around the world who are supported by the church's members. A letter from the Balcoms, for instance, explains their call to serve the Lord in South Africa: The country is "full of immigrants from other desperate African nations. The government infrastructure cannot support the millions of native South Africans who live in below-standard conditions (no running water, etc.).... Youth with a Mission is responding with hope, help, and the promises of God."

A bulletin from the church's youth ministry recounts their three trips to Mexico during the year and features pictures of teenagers building homes in a poor town while the temperature is well over 100°. A junior high school student writes, "God really humbled me, and I am now much more thankful for all that God has blessed me with. On the last night...they asked us, 'What are you taking home with you?' I thought this was best answered by one of the young men from Belmont who said, 'I'm taking home with me a need to come back!'" Next summer, the writer adds, he'll be joining the high school group for a stint among Brazil's poor.

Church is clearly not a "weekend thing" for people like this. But what about the harshest stereotype this culture conjures up in the minds of some—that of the zealot whose self-righteousness casts an ugly pall over even his finest acts? Well, the Belmont Church's pamphlet "Prophetic Guidelines" urges parishioners to guard against just such dangers. "Be careful not to 'preach,'" it says. And "watch the motive and the attitude with which you move in the gifts of the Holy Spirit," because "the greatest gift is love (I Corinthians 13)."

A similar spirit can be felt at Christ Church, a large Pentecostal congregation committed to a vast array of community service, personal study, social, and music-making activities. The church sponsors a sister house of worship in Nashville's inner city and encourages self-sacrificial giving (as with a lobby display of antiques and mementos voluntarily surrendered by parishioners). A Sunday service includes testimony in broken English from an Azerbaijani immigrant to Nashville, thanking the congregation for their recent gift of $20,000 to set up a chapel back in his home village. In the middle of a powerful sermon (parts of which appear on pages 72-3), the church's young assistant pastor reminds his flock that "our Caucasian minds down here in the South mustn't forget that Jesus was an Asian. When God came to Earth, he was an Asian baby who became a refugee in Africa as a toddler."

Likewise, Pastor Mansfield at Belmont devotes half a sermon, after explaining the scene with the "homeless man," to the need to struggle to be countercultural, to swim upstream and resist complacency, to criticize and challenge oneself. He confesses that he's been lulled into self-satisfaction in recent months himself and that he regrets Christians give less than five percent of their income to good works. (He neglects to mention that this percentage is considerably higher than the figure for the secular population.) He also recalls the story of Sodom in Ezekiel and admonishes the congregation that the Sodomites didn't just sin sexually but also by being "arrogant, overfed, uncaring for the poor."

In a similar vein, the Baptist Bookstore sells Tony Campolo's *Partly Right: Learning from the Critics of Christianity.* "Whether from outside the church or within the body of Christ," the dust jacket declares, critics of "middle-class Christianity" have "something important to say to you as a believer." Inside, the author exhorts Christians to serve the less fortunate, and he has respectful words for evangelicals on the right and left.

Even the Christian artists we met engage in serious self-criticism: Cadle of Hosanna Sacred Arts laments that "so often the Church has just had 'bathrobe theater.' Shouldn't we give the King of Kings our best?" Another Christian dramatist, Charlie Jones, agrees: "I believe the greatest praise that we can give to God is doing high-quality work."

Observers may be taken aback by the glossy marketing that Nashville religion often entails, and there are serious questions about whether, for example, something like Christian rock is drawing secular rock-lovers toward the Christian message, or drawing Christians away from that message toward a dubious demimonde. But it's clear the believers of Nashville—and their 80 million compatriots around the country—are passionately engaged in the most pressing questions of the day, and that they're eager to use every bit of marketing savvy and humanitarian feeling they can muster to carry their message to as many people as possible. If another Great Awakening is arising in America, its historians will spend much time retelling the story of Nashville.

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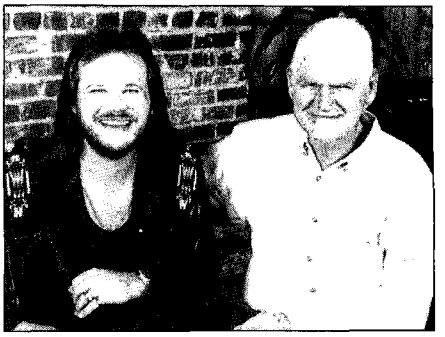
The Row on Music Row



Harlan Howard (right) with Travis Tritt

By John Meroney

Sara Evans is hoping three is a charm. For the third time in her 26 years, this Missouri farm girl has come here chasing her dream: to become a country music star. ■ Evans is one of thousands seeking just part of a business worth more than $2.5 billion a year, and her struggle to make it as a singer of traditional country music—a distinctive sound rich with lyrics about love and romance, loss and hurt—tells a story about the state of the music itself, and the town that has been its home since the mid-1920s.

In this era when Garth Brooks has become the most successful solo artist in history, many on Music Row—the few blocks of bungalows and low-slung offices that are home to Nashville's music publishing companies, recording studios, and record labels—seem to be grappling like never before with the question that has vexed this industry for years: how to broaden the market for country music without abandoning its classic style. It seems as though the answer to this question will determine both the success of artists such as Sara Evans, as well as the larger issue of what role Nashville plays in the entertainment industry.

Evans has in fact come a long way toward her dream. In late 1996, she landed a deal with RCA Records—the prestigious label that was once a launching pad and home for country giants such as Eddy Arnold, Jim Reeves, Willie Nelson, and Dolly Parton—and her debut album, *Three Chords and the Truth,* was released to critical acclaim last fall.

Newsweek called her a "new Patsy Cline" with a "distinctive sassiness." *Entertainment Weekly* ranked her in the same league with Loretta Lynn and Patty Loveless. *Billboard* called her a "considerable country talent" who "invites favorable comparisons to the best country divas." One single from Evans' album did crack the Top 40 country charts, but almost five months after the album's release, it has yet to get airplay in major radio markets—the critical factor in the success of a record. Having sold slightly more than 20,000 copies, she is still a long way from the 80,000 industry experts say is necessary to break even in today's business.

But Evans remains doggedly optimistic. "God put me on this earth to be a singer. It's what I love to do more than anything, and I'm going to make it." She and her six brothers and sisters grew up on a farm outside New Franklin, Missouri, where the family raised corn, beans, tobacco, and livestock for a living. "We were a very poor farm family." From an early age, Evans' grandfather taught her all about Nashville's "Grand Ole Opry," the longest-running live musical radio program in the world, and the legends who decorated its stage.

By the time she was four, Evans and her brothers would travel on weekends and during the summers as the Evans Family Band, performing gospel and bluegrass music at festivals and church revivals. Renamed the Sara Evans Show once the talent of its youngest member became evident, they were eventually pulling in $50 per performer each night. This augmented a rural family income so paltry that Evans' mother once traded firewood for Levi's so her children would have Christmas presents.

Evans first traveled to Nashville when she was 11. Her father accompanied her so she could record a single, "What Does

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Sara Evans

a Nice Girl Do in the Meantime?" and on its flip side, "I'm Going to Be the Only Female Fiddle Player in Charlie Daniels' Band." It didn't exactly crack the *Billboard* charts. But her dream never died, and her next foray to town, after high school and a short try at college, was part of a more calculated plan to break into the business. "I skipped college, and had no other aspirations but to sing," Evans says. "So I came here with my older brother, started waiting tables at the Holiday Inn on Briley Parkway, and tried to meet whomever I could."

The person who made the most lasting impression was Craig Schleske, a musician from Oregon and now her husband. "He was a room service waiter, in town with his brothers, trying to do the same thing. We started dating, fell in love, and he asked me to go to Oregon with him and sing in his band."

Evans spent the next three years with them in the Pacific Northwest, opening for the likes of Willie Nelson, Tim McGraw, and Clay Walker. But even though she was performing six nights a week, and making good money, Evans still felt she was a million miles away from the only place her dream could happen. She had matured, and longed to return to Nashville, determined to finally break into the music business.

During Evans' absence, Nashville had continued in its on-again, off-again transition from traditional country to pop, accelerated by the 1990 debut of Garth Brooks. Traditional country—characterized by fiddles, mandolins, and rhythm instruments like an acoustic guitar and bass—had begun to take a back seat to a more neutral, almost pop music sound that used rock-and-roll production elements. It had certainly come a long way from the early 1960s, when Willie Nelson was trying to break into the business as a songwriter. "If a song had more than three chords in it, there was a good chance it wouldn't be called country, and there was no way you could make a record in Nashville that wasn't called country at that time," he once said. "I had problems with my song 'Crazy' because it had four or five chords in it. Not that 'Crazy' is real complicated; it just wasn't your basic three-chord country hillbilly song."

And the artists were changing, too. Mary-Chapin Carpenter seemed to represent this new trend in progressive female country artists. The daughter of a publishing executive, Carpenter was raised in Princeton, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C., and sported an Ivy League education. Then there was k.d. lang, who also broke into the country scene during this period. lang was different. She became known as much for her duets with Roy Orbison, Loretta Lynn, and Kitty Wells as she did for denouncing meat-eating and publicly declaring herself a lesbian. These women were definite departures from someone such as that "First Lady of Country Music," Tammy Wynette, who before stardom in the late 1960s, had worked as a cotton picker, hairdresser, and waitress. For many Americans, Wynette and her classics "Stand By Your Man" and "D-I-V-O-R-C-E," with conservative, anti-feminist themes, symbolized the material coming out of Nashville. By the time of Evans' return in late 1995, more than the sound and the major players had changed. The business had also become much more profitable.

Country music had finally surpassed both pop and urban contemporary formats as the number-one music choice behind rock. Between 1994 and 1995, the Recording Industry Association of America certified that close to 300 albums had sold enough copies to qualify

John Meroney, whose great-uncle was the legendary bluegrass fiddler Chubby Wise, writes regularly on culture for The American Enterprise.

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as either gold (500,000) or platinum (1,000,000) records, the highest numbers this town had ever seen. Revenues had exceeded the $1 billion mark, up from $724 million in 1990.

Sara Evans had always preferred the traditional country style, and in fact once said she had grown to "detest country pop" but was nevertheless encouraged by the changes in Nashville. She returned just when it seemed as though an artist cut from the fabric of traditional country music might again have a shot at taking hold. "It was like, Oh! A country singer! No one was used to that," says Evans.

Wasting no time, she sought out entertainment lawyer Brenner Van Meter for advice. It just so happened that Van Meter was considering leaving her legal practice to manage talent. Recognizing Evans' obvious abilities as both a singer and songwriter, and sensing the appeal of an artist who had actually lived a gritty country existence and performed that sort of music, Van Meter arranged for Evans to meet her husband, an executive at the Sony Tree Publishing Co.

Through her introduction to John Van Meter, Evans found work recording songs that writers would then submit to major artists as potential album cuts. In no time, she was in demand as established songwriters sought her out to give their material a test run.

When the Van Meters heard that veteran songwriter Harlan Howard wanted to pitch his 1964 classic, "I've Got a Tiger By the Tail" (which he had written with Buck Owens, who subsequently recorded it) to a female star, they immediately thought Evans' voice and approach would be precisely the style needed to convince a major artist to record it; so they invited Howard to the recording session.

"I went in, sang the song, came out of the singing booth, and there's Harlan Howard on the couch," remembers Evans. "He said, 'Are you that little girl in there singing? You're great. I've been looking for you for years to sing my music. I can't believe how country you are.' I had never even thought about it before. Now it's a big thing, Sara Evans is so country and so traditional."

Enlisting Howard's enthusiasm and help, Evans and the Van Meters were confident enough to approach RCA Records about Evans finally having her own career. Joe Galante, the president, made Evans an offer the same day she auditioned for him.

Sara Evans was now officially part of what is a booming business, one that goes far beyond WSM Radio's Saturday night "Grand Ole Opry" broadcast. As of December, 81 record labels, 289 music publishing companies, 174 recording studios, and 80 video production companies were based here. And it isn't home just to country, either. Nashville is becoming a music industry Mecca where all formats want a place at the table. Contemporary Christian music is one of Music Row's most thriving enterprises. And Hollywood has also begun to tap into Nashville. Steven Spielberg, David Geffen, and Jeffrey Katzenberg opened their DreamWorks Records label here last year, as did Disney through its Lyric Street Records. The town is even headquarters for at least 40 national advertisement and jingle makers, including the creator of the Budweiser frogs TV spots.

One who has witnessed the change from the days of Patsy Cline to Sara Evans is songwriter Harlan Howard, whom I interviewed at his office on posh Wedgewood Avenue. "I'm just sitting around here amazed at what's happened to my beloved little Ernest Tubb-Lefty Frizell country music business, for which I've always had such a passion," says the man whose songs include "Why Not Me?" recorded by the Judds; the Patsy Cline classic "I Fall to Pieces"; and "Busted," the Ray Charles hit.

Howard came to town in 1960, the same era when other songwriters such as Hank Cochran, Mel Tillis, Roger Miller, and Willie Nelson arrived. They rented rooms at "Mom" Upchurch's, an East Nashville boarding house where rates were stuck at Depression-era prices; lodged at Dunn's Trailer Court, where rentals ran $25 per week; tried out new material at Tootsie's Orchid Lounge on Lower Broadway; and walked Music Row, pitching songs directly to top executives and listening to such stars as Jim Reeves and Ray Price record at producer Owen Bradley's Quonset Hut studio.

Although born in Kentucky, Howard, now 69, came to Nashville from Los Angeles, where he had been working in a factory and driving a forklift. Writing in his spare time, he mailed his songs to Nashville. One afternoon Ray Price telephoned him on the factory floor, requesting more. Howard sent him one inspired by his Army experience. "From the time we got up until we went to bed, we were always doing things numerically. So I thought about a song that used numbers. I started with 'Heartache number one was when you left' and just continued from there." The tune—"Heartaches by the Number"—became a gigantic hit for Price, and was later recorded by rock-and-roll's Guy Mitchell.

Nashville's rewards were generous: Howard got a royalty check for $48,000—and three days later, another for $52,000. "I didn't even have a bank account," he says. "I went out and did the typical hillbilly thing. I bought a brand-new, white-on-white Cadillac Coupe DeVille. Country music was so much fun then. Then all of a sudden, we got rich and famous. The big bankers and managers came to town. Look around. Record companies used to be in houses."

Howard believes country music works best when it sticks to songs about love. "I want to write songs about the boy looking for the girl, or the boy missing the girl," he says. And so he is encouraged by the style and substance of what Sara Evans captured in her album. But he worries that some executives are less than enthusiastic about a future for this tradition.

One recent example came when Johnny Cash and Ricky Scaggs wanted to record albums with the kind of music on which they built their careers. Music Row seemed unwilling to embrace such projects and claimed that kind of music had limited appeal. So Cash signed with the Los Angeles-based American Recordings—home to the Red Hot Chili Peppers rock band—and Scaggs with Rounder Music, a bluegrass label located in Cambridge, Massachusetts The response to their albums reveal that those in the executive suites of Music Row may need to double-check their market research: sales

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for both releases have been very strong, and not only did both garner considerable critical praise, but Cash's record was nominated for two Grammy Awards.

Nevertheless, many here still assert that the business is moving in a different direction and that traditional country cannot expand the music's market. They insist the only way to broaden the country audience is with cutting-edge songs that bridge the gap between country and pop—and even with songs that take on controversial social and political causes. Garth Brooks himself recently remarked that the song themes characterizing his strain of country music will be "more stuff about human rights, women's rights, the HIV virus, pulling together, peace.... On [my] new album, we do the single-mother things... like, 'She's Gonna Make It.'"

Patrick Quigley, president and CEO of Capitol/Nashville, the record label that is home to Brooks, also sees this as Nashville's future. A liberal Democrat in an industry known for its unapologetic conservatism, Quigley sees his "core marketing challenge" to make country music more palatable to consumers in metropolitan markets such as New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. His objective is not only to stage events that generate media attention and consumer interest (like the Central Park concert Brooks held last August before releasing his *Sevens* album), but also to move beyond the middle-class conservatives who make up country's core audience. "The traditional country fan is much more conservative than the average American. If we can make country more progressive, there are millions and millions of people who'd say, This music is great. It means something to me."

Pat Quigley (left), president and CEO of Capitol/Nashville, with Garth Brooks

Photo credit: Alan Mayor

And the music that means something to Quigley—who admits he was influenced by the type of '60s culture scorned in Merle Haggard's classic "Okie From Muskogee" (*We don't smoke marijuana in Muskogee / We don't take our trips on LSD / We don't burn our draft cards down on Main Street / We like livin' right, bein' free*)—is much different from what typically comes out of Music Row. In fact, Nashville has never pushed controversial social and political issues in its music the way Hollywood has in its movies and TV

"GONE COUNTRY"

by Bob McDill

She's been playing that room on the strip for ten years in Vegas
Every night she looks in the mirror but she only ages
She's been readin' 'bout Nashville and all the records that everybody's buying
Says, "I'm a simple girl myself, grew up on Long Island"
So she packs her bags to try her hand
Says this might be my last chance

She's gone country, look at them boots
She's gone country, back to her roots
She's gone country, a new kind of suit
She's gone country, here she comes

Well, the folk scene's dead, but he's holding out in the Village
He's been writing songs, speaking out against wealth and privilege
He says, "I don't believe in money, but a man could make him a killin'
'Cause some of that stuff don't sound much different than Dylan
I hear down there it's changed you see
They're not as backward as they used to be"

He's gone country, look at them boots
He's gone country, back to his roots
He's gone country, a new kind of suit
He's gone country, here he comes

He commutes to L.A., but he's got a house in the Valley
But the bills are piling up and the pop scene just ain't on a rally
And he says, "Honey, I'm a serious composer, schooled in voice and composition
But with the crime and the smog these days, this ain't no place for children
Lord, it sounds so easy, this shouldn't take long
Be back in the money in no time at all"

He's gone country, look at them boots
He's gone country, back to his roots
He's gone country, a new kind of suit
He's gone country, here he comes

Yeah, he's gone country, a new kind of walk
He's gone country, a new kind of talk
He's gone country, look at them boots
He's gone country, oh back to his roots

He's gone country
He's gone country
Everybody's gone country
Yeah we've gone country
The whole world's gone country

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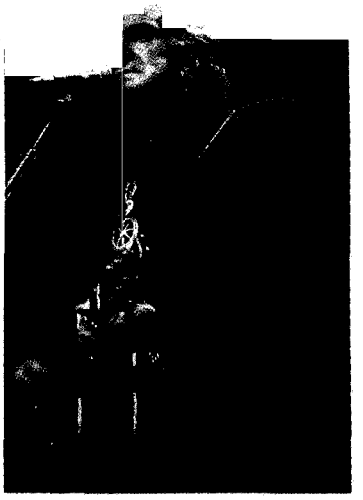
JOHNNY CASH COMES HOME



Fotex/Shooting Star

IN 1974 I UNDERWENT A KIND OF MENTAL DIVORCE from the power structure on Music Row. This happened after I went along, reluctantly, with the CBS bosses on *John R. Cash,* which was their idea of an album to restore my sales potential. They sent a producer down to Nashville with a bag full of songs they thought I should record, had me decide which ones I *would* record and what key I'd sing them in, and shipped the producer and the song choices back to New York. Then they recorded the instrumental tracks with their musicians and arrangements, sent the whole package back to Nashville, and had me record my vocals onto the tracks. I wasn't pleased with either the process or the results, and I decided I wouldn't do that kind of thing ever again.

Rick Rubin showed up in my life in 1993. I thought it all pretty unlikely. He was the ultimate hippie, bald top but with hair down over his shoulders. His record label was all young, urban music: the Red Hot Chili Peppers, the Beastie Boys. I asked him how he'd go about recording me. What would he do differently from what everyone else had tried?

"I won't do anything," he told me. *"You'll* do it. You'll come to my house, sit down in my living room, and start singing. I'm not very familiar with a lot of the music you love, but I want to hear it all. Somewhere in there we'll find a trigger song that will tell us we're heading in the right direction. "

Now he really had my attention. For years I'd wanted to do a collection of favorite songs recorded very intimately with just my voice and guitar as if it were midnight and you and I were in a room together all by ourselves. I'd suggested it to CBS twice, and also Mercury. They thought it was a bad idea.

I saw problems though. "I don't want to record on your label and be marketed on the alternative music scene or to the rock 'n' roll crowd,".I told Rick. "I have no illusions about who I am, how old I am, and what a stretch it might be to relate to these young people. I won't record with a lot of rock 'n' roll musicians."

He assured me that nothing of the kind was on his agenda. I went to Rick's house, and for three nights he and I sat in his living room and I sang my songs into his microphone. It was a great experience. I took my music all the way back to its roots, back to the heart, and recorded about a hundred songs. Then we listened to them all, marked out the ones that had the feeling we were looking for, and went to work getting them right. We experimented with added instrumentation, but in the end decided that it worked better with me alone. No reverb, no echo, no overdubbing, no mixing, just me playing my guitar and singing. I didn't even use a pick; every guitar note on the album, which we called *American Recordings,* came from my thumb. We got the honest, unadulterated Johnny Cash.

The reaction was positive. I don't think I lost any of my old fans, and I might have gained a few new ones. I won a Grammy for "Contemporary Folk Song Album," and out on the road it started feeling like 1955 again. I discovered all over again how it felt to play for a crowd of people with no chairs or tables, standing on their feet, jammed together, energizing each other. The new generation wanted to hear the songs I'd recorded at Sun Records in the '50s, and it was a real pleasure to oblige. I could bring it all down to just myself on a stool, with my black D28 Martin and two mikes, singing for the folks. It was also deeply rewarding to find that young people were eager, even hungry, for the spiritual songs I've always loved. I'd always prayed that might happen.

At the Glastonbury Festival in England I sat on my stool and played my songs for an audience of a hundred thousand people who really listened, and I realized I'd come full circle, back to the bare bones of my music, pre-stardom, pre-electric, pre-Memphis. I could have been back in Dyess, singing with just Momma to hear me on the front porch under the clear night sky of Arkansas in the 1940s with the panthers screaming in the bush, and it seemed the audience enjoyed that feeling almost as much as I did.

Now Rick and I are talking about mapping out a selection of spiritual songs—not old songs but contemporary music I've found and written that speaks of the spirit—and then recording them in a cathedral. Rick has scouted out a location that might work. I can't wait.

—This is adapted from the new book Cash: The Autobiography, *by Johnny Cash with Patrick Carr.*

programs. And that fact has only stoked Quigley's enthusiasm for a song that Capitol plans for release later this spring, one he is ambitiously touting as "the most dramatic song I've heard, maybe in my whole life."

It is the story of a young man who, while attempting to rob a convenience store, gives the clerk a note that says, "Nobody Love, Nobody Gets Hurt," also the title of the song. The song eventually reveals that the boy made an error on the note that tells more about him than he intended.

She said, "I don't think you want to do this
Sounds to me like there's more to it."
He said, "Spare your views on my abusive childhood
'Cause the last time I saw my ol' man was a photograph in our garbage can
He never gave a damn so tell me why I should,
And you don't know the half of all the demons that I battle"

The message of the song, to be performed by Suzy Bogguss, an artist with roots in folk and country-rock, seems

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right out of '60s sociology: criminals aren't responsible for their crimes—society is.

Quigley, who intends to put the full force of Capitol/Nashville behind it, believes this sort of material will strike a chord in major cities, not only because it depicts crime but because it cuts to the heart of the angst and isolation from which twentysomethings are said to be suffering. Simply put, he says, "It deals with America." But on further examination, Quigley's "America" appears more curious than the one known by most people. "I've lived my whole life in Manhattan," he says. "The country for us was always the Hamptons."

The city of Nashville isn't the only thing new to Quigley. He has spent his career in marketing products other than records and is known for his success with such products as Rolling Rock beer, Swatch watches, and Lange ski equipment (an industry in which he is recognized for creating a rechargeable device that heats ski boots and recommending the company change the color of its boots from orange to yellow). Garth Brooks himself lobbied for Quigley's installation as head of Capitol/Nashville, hoping Quigley would be able to bring the same expertise to music. Brooks told *Billboard* last November, "Quigley has the vision." But while that vision may be venerated in Manhattan and Hollywood, it has typically been rejected by Nashville.

For example, when actress Sharon Stone wanted to begin a second career as a director, she decided to start with music videos. Seeking a new artist, Stone approached Sara Evans, and proposed a flamboyant, tawdry production, worthy of Sunset Boulevard or Madison Avenue. She proposed scenes on L.A.'s eccentric Venice Beach where Evans, holding a cat, would be seen riding a skateboard and writhing suggestively against graffiti walls, sporting an Elizabeth Taylor *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*-type hairstyle. No doubt such a provocative approach for a country artist would generate attention, but Evans rejected Stone's idea, realizing that it might have backfired and alienated her from the traditional country fans she hopes to attract. She opted instead for a more tasteful approach, and shot her debut video on rural locations in nearby Dickson.

Some point to a recent decline in country radio ratings and argue that Nashville needs to do something drastic like the Stone proposal to win back listeners. But studies by country stations show that as country blurs into pop music, listeners are most likely to switch to the real thing: stations that are purely Top 40, soft rock, and alternative rock. Describing the "mainstream country music" generated by artists such as Brooks, Shania Twain, and LeAnn Rimes, critic Nicholas Dawidoff says that characterizing this as "country" is "a misnomer. [It's] really pop rock music for a prospering, mostly conservative white middle class. It's kempt, comfortable music."

Long-time music insider Dick Clark, who started his career 50 years ago as a country disc jockey, agrees. "Brooks is still labeled a country artist because he wears a hat. If you look at his stage presentations and everything else, it's popular music." Clark now watches the industry from his vantage point as executive producer of the Nashville Network's "Prime Time Country," a weeknight program modeled after "The Tonight Show." "This whole new generation of country performers was brought up by some old-time rock-and-rollers. They've amalgamated, combined, and homogenized and that's disturbing to some purists," Clark told *TAE*.

Those purists think artists with Sara Evans' style now have a chance to swing the pendulum back in the other direction. This will be hard work, though, since the homogenizing "trend" has been happening for decades. One key player who has for years been moving Nashville away from its "Twang Town" reputation is songwriter Bob McDill. A peculiar Music Row veteran who quotes Truman Capote and Marshall McLuhan in conversation, enjoys duck hunting, and says he subscribes to the *Limbaugh Letter,* McDill has had hits such as "Nobody Likes Sad Songs," recorded by Ronnie Milsap, and "You Never Miss a Real Good Thing," by Crystal Gayle, songs that sound more like pop than country. Singers as diverse as Perry Como, Ray Charles, Jerry Garcia, and Chubby Checker have recorded McDill's work. He says those who point to the Grand Ole Opry as the route Nashville ought to follow are confused about the music business. "The Grand Ole Opry is tourism. Music Row is where the music takes place."

Despite that opinion, McDill agrees with purists on one issue: Nashville has become dull. "People with opinions have been replaced with new kids in hats who are singing something some committee says will get radio airplay." McDill's frustrations over the bland artists featured so prominently on Top 40 country radio is shared by long-time *Country Music* magazine columnist Hazel Smith, who only half-jokingly told me that before new artists sign with major labels they should have had the experience of "spending a night in jail and going through a divorce" in order to develop the mettle to sing honestly about the grit that so often is a theme of country lyrics.

At the tiny Bluebird Cafe music club out on Hillsboro Road, the spot to watch dreamers who are trying to break into the business, it's a crapshoot to find someone who breaks the milquetoast mold of so many of Nashville's current artists. One thing is certain: any newcomer will have to look back at least a generation to find more than a few stars with the authentic, sharp-edged sound that once defined the music of this town.

"Nashville's waiting for a Messiah," Harlan Howard says. "In a country with 240 million people, you know there's got to be someone that great out there." He imagines something akin to the feel when Johnny Cash hit town in the '50s.

For now, Howard's resigned to writing. "I want to do a song about that couple down in Birmingham who's broke and can't figure out if they still love each other. I swear, I think that's what the public wants from us."

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THE OTHER NASHVILLE MUSIC

IN GOSPEL MUSIC THESE DAYS, the cross-overs run in both directions: Pop diva Barbra Streisand, country sensation LeAnn Rimes, and rap singer M. C. Hammer have all crossed over from mainstream music to inspirational material, while acts like Jars of Clay, Michael W. Smith, Kirk Franklin, and dc Talk can boast of gold records and TV videos that have moved the other way, from the Christian subculture to mainstream media.

Both types of cross-overs are posting impressive numbers: Streisand's latest album, made up entirely of inspirational material both Jewish and Christian, made it to *Billboard*'s top five. LeAnn Rimes' new album *Inspirational Songs* has sold a quarter-million copies in a single week. From the other side of the divide, dc Talk and Michael W. Smith have seen albums debut in *Billboard*'s top 20. (In Smith's case, that put him ahead of Michael Jackson's *HIStory*.) The debut album by Jars of Clay sold over two million copies, in both Christian and secular markets.

The Christian music industry has grown explosively since it first began to be noticed in the 1980s. From record sales of $83 million in 1985, the genre reached $538 million in 1996, the latest year for which figures are available. In the last half-decade, annual growth has averaged 22 percent, and *Billboard* speculates that black gospel albums alone have the potential to top $1 billion in sales. And then there is the money earned from concert tickets, which probably amounts to another half-billion dollars annually.

Gospel recordings—defined as any music that contains lyrics of Christian faith—now outsell jazz, classical, and New Age, and the industry's explosive growth has come as other genres have seen their sales remain flat. The Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir can now sell out Radio City Music Hall and Madison Square Garden, while Steven Curtis Chapman and Amy Grant have done the same at the Hollywood Bowl.

The Gospel Music Association (GMA), based in Nashville, brags that no other musical genre boasts as many styles or as much diversity. The category includes not only traditional and pop material but also Christian rap, reggae, ska, and alternative rock. There are "no ethnic, economic, or stylistic boundaries in gospel music," GMA insists, and "you won't find any other genre that is created by, and appeals to, a wider audience."

Gospel (sometimes also called "contemporary Christian music") now has its own 24-hour music video network, Z Music Television, and has become so profitable that all of the major Christian record labels are now owned by major secular companies like EMI, Arista, and Warner Brothers. More than 2,000 radio stations broadcast gospel to a combined listenership of 20 million per week, making it the fourth most popular radio format.

GMA president Frank Breeden notes with a smile that even Interscope Records—criticized for its gangster rap by Bill Bennett and C. Delores Tucker—has just had 100 of its employees join the Gospel Music Association because the company has started distributing groups like God's Property. Other surprising inroads include the Sunday gospel brunch at the hot L.A. club House of Blues.

One of the first strongholds of the Christian music business was Southern California, but over the last decade most of the industry has relocated to Nashville, lured by the city's ample creativity, religiosity, and family-friendliness. The music's audience has widened at the same time. Representatives from over 40 foreign countries are attending the 1998 GMA convention, and groups like Petra now play in places like Bogota, Colombia. Kenny Marks performs in Seoul, South Korea.

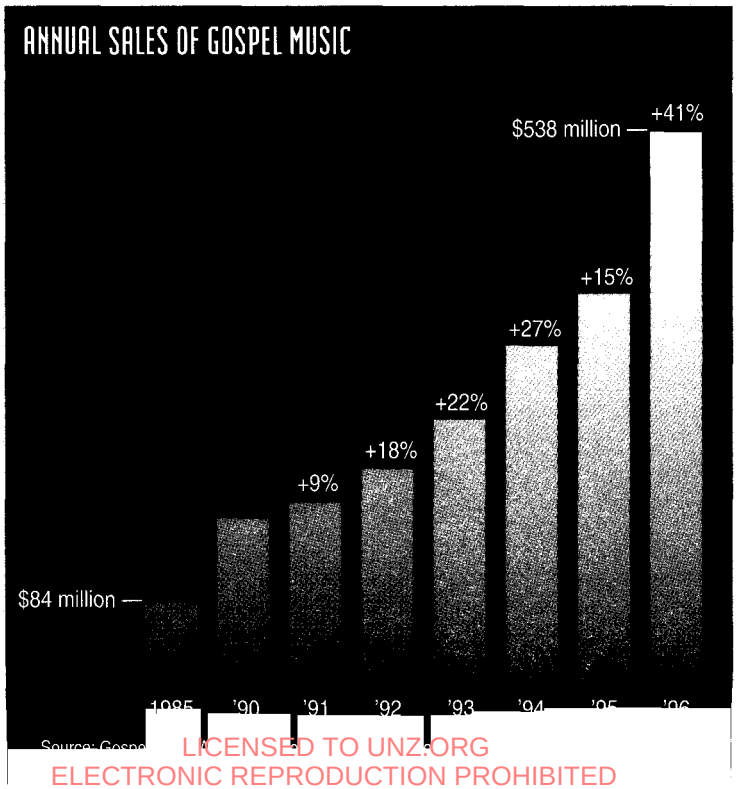
Has mainstream success meant a watering-down of the gospel message? Breeden, a graduate of Nashville's Free Will Baptist Bible College, insists it has not. He notes that when one very successful gospel artist, a winner of five Dove Awards (the gospel equivalent of a Grammy), became publicly embroiled in an adulterous affair with one of his backup singers, his record label (the Christian subsidiary of Warner Brothers) pulled his hugely popular records from distribution. A costly decision made on principle.

Breeden is proud that Kirk Franklin's explicitly Christian song "Stomp" recently went into the video rotation on MTV's "The Grind," while Jars of Clay opens concerts for Sting. "Gospel music has been let out of its box," he explains, "and our message to the world is that it's not just for Sundays anymore. That's the problem: we've been compartmentalizing our faith, living artificial lives Monday through Saturday. Your faith can go with you everywhere."

There are good reasons, Breeden notes, for gospel music to "stretch the envelope. Jesus chose in His ministry to hang out with tax collectors, prostitutes, adulterers, and the disenfranchised, because they were the ones who needed Him. It was the organized religious people who didn't know they needed Him."

Dottie Peoples, a black singer best known for her traditional gospel songs, isn't worried either: "There's nothing wrong with crossing over, as long as you take 'The Cross' with you."

—Scott Walter



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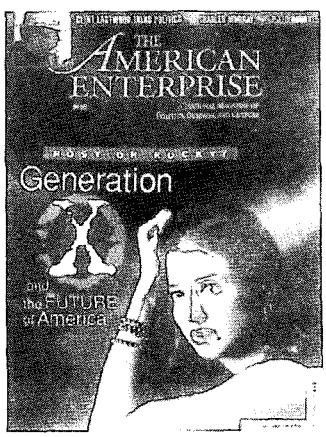

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THE AMERICAN ENTERPRISE

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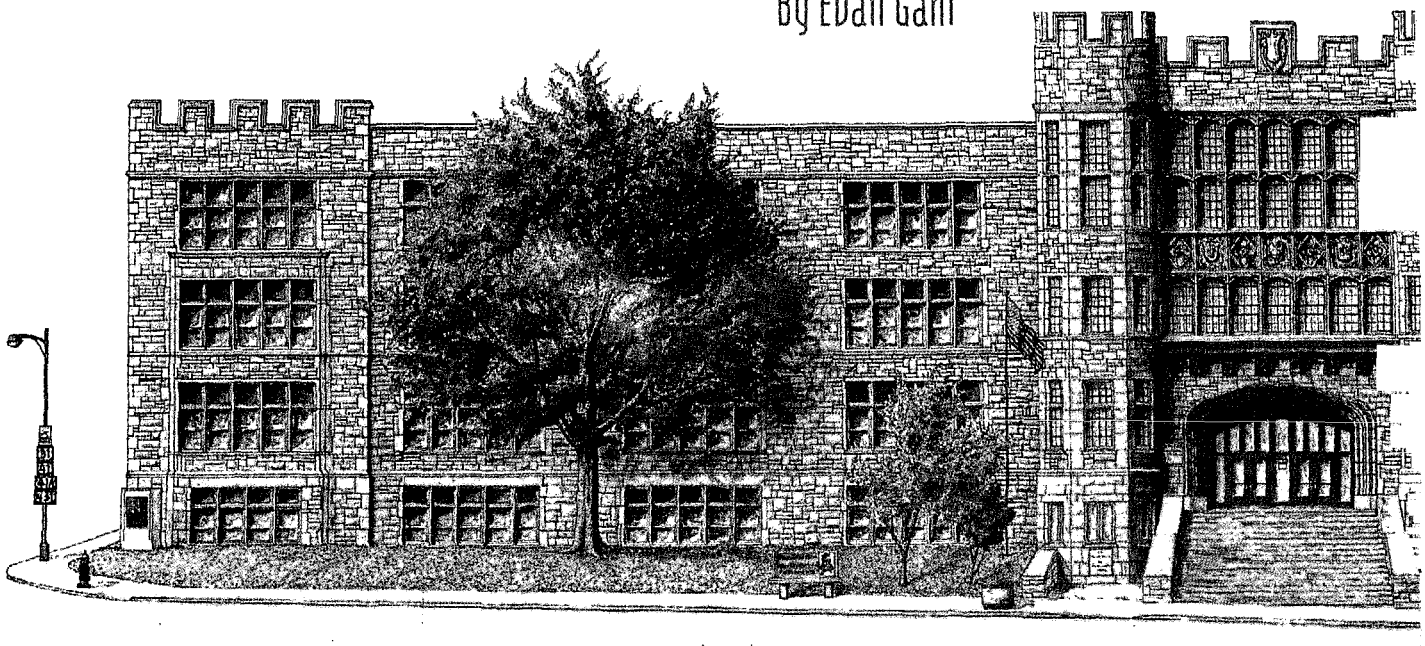
A Classroom Tour of Nashville

By Evan Gahr



Today, the most forward-looking school reformers are the advocates of a return to an old-fashioned "core curriculum." Building on the findings of researchers like E. D. Hirsch (author of *Cultural Literacy*) the backers of a core curriculum argue that helping children master a basic body of common facts, great books, and historical knowledge is the most important task of schooling. Traditional knowledge-based education, they argue, is far more useful (especially to underprivileged children) than more modern methods that emphasize "skills" over content, and student feelings over objective accuracy.

Of all the charges leveled against advocates of core curricula, perhaps the most trite is that they're too wedded to the status quo and haven't kept up with changing times. Recently, Nashville became the second major city in the nation to institute an E.D. Hirsch-style core curriculum district wide, and they did it at the behest of Democrat and Mayor Phil Bredesen. Nashville Board of Education member Murray Philip, a leading supporter of the decision, argues that the teachers' unions and other opponents of the curriculum were the real reactionaries: too set in their ways to make long-overdue reforms.

"Don't look to people who've always done things the same way and expect them to do things differently," Philip warned a group of retired businessmen gathered at a Shoney's restaurant for their weekly breakfast meeting. Though Murray's speech was backed with references to various education theorists, he can't easily be derided as an elitist. He supports himself running a bathroom tiling business. Indeed, just moments after his talk he hopped into his cluttered yellow van and headed to his first job of the day.

There are hundreds of Nashvillians like Philip with fresh, practical views on the subject of education. Many of Nashville's schools themselves—including 14 private colleges and universities, four public universities, the public schools that have the core curriculum, and 44 private schools—stand apart from conventional approaches. The liberal platitudes and assumptions that drench educational debate in much of the U.S. often don't describe the reality in this city.

For instance: Fisk University, Nashville's renowned black institution, has no use for the Afrocentrism and racial bravado that now prevail on most campuses. And in a far cry from their liberal counterparts at most schools of education, professors at Vanderbilt's Peabody College actually decry teacher unions. At Belmont, a Baptist school with an at-

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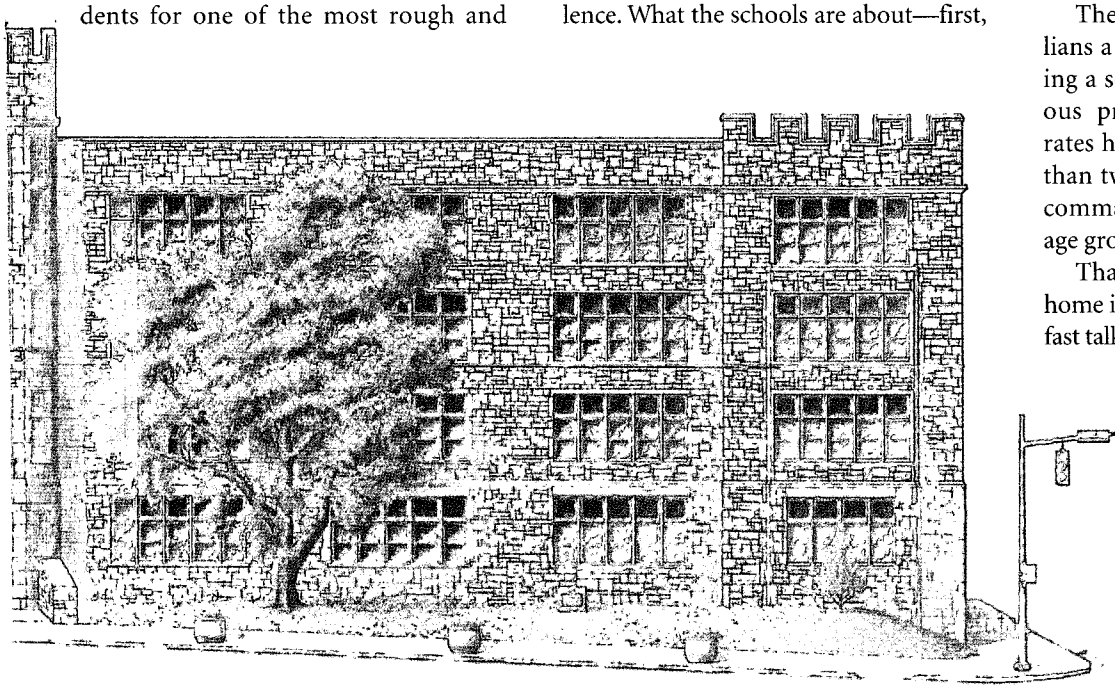
mosphere so civil that department heads are said to pass over funds to whoever needs them most, the business school has a special program that prepares students for one of the most rough and tumble industries in the country: the music business.



Teaching kids the basics has proved quite controversial in Nashville. The central school board is said to have done its best to sabotage the core curriculum after it passed, by giving schools just weeks to implement it. Meanwhile, union officials have been outright hostile. The Metro Nashville Education Association (MNEA) denounced the program as unworkable just weeks after the schools opened, even urging teachers not to teach parts of it. That won a strong rebuke from Bredesen, who said, "It is not an option for any individual teacher or the MNEA to decide what they want to teach in the classroom."

In an interview with *TAE*, Bredesen explained that he took up his long, bloody, and ultimately successful fight because "I really believe that schools have moved away from academic excellence as their primary reason for being into a host of other stuff. This was my way of trying to put the focus back on academic excellence. What the schools are about—first, second, and third—is preparing children with the knowledge and skills they need for adult life, both in the area of citizenship and of economic success. The core curriculum is a way of doing that."

When asked how any education reformer can override opposition from the education bureaucracy Bredesen was blunt. "'Override' is the operative word. I mean, nobody likes change. But the resistance has largely gone away now, because people realized it was going to happen. There are certainly a lot of teachers who feel it's too demanding. But that's not an argument I have sympathy for. I'm very much a conservative in the sense that I think every American ought to have a common cultural base of knowledge to be a good citizen."

Teachers received very detailed instructions for implementing the curriculum in grades K-6. (An expansion to secondary schools is planned for the future.) The instructions divided the school year into six-week clusters, with, for example, fourth graders taught the definition of republican government and "natural rights" in one cluster and fifth graders slated to learn the "rules of fractions" in another.

The core curriculum offers Nashvillians a mechanism for radically reshaping a school system that has some serious problems. High school dropout rates hover around 20 percent, and less than two-thirds of Metro third graders command basic reading skills for their age group.

That's a point Murray Philip drives home in speeches like his Shoney's breakfast talk. After audience members finished their breakfast and rose to recite the pledge of allegiance, Philip launched into his spiel. Establishing a rigorous body of common facts to be taught is the first step, he says, towards revamping the public schools. Deflecting complaints that the plan might hurt minorities, he asserts that it actually "is the great equalizer, because all students will be taught the same thing. The Mayor gave us something important: high expectations."

At Percy Priest Elementary School, the core curriculum seemed a big hit among parents and students gathered for a veritable multi-media display to mark the end of a six-week cluster. Students displayed projects about everything from Oliver Cromwell to Betsy Ross and the American Revolution. Kids dressed in revolutionary-era garb couldn't show their parents their work fast enough. Others used computers to tell stories about the war. Most parents seemed to be impressed. "Better to push students so they can learn more," declared parent Diana Forbes as her daughter Kristen tugged on a classmate's shoulder.

Even teachers took part in the presentation. The school librarian wandered school halls clad in a seventeenth-century-style dress. Rodney Chase strolled about in full military uniform. Chase is an active duty National Guard

Evan Gahr writes frequently on education and culture for The American Enterprise.

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member and a Gulf War veteran, and he has brought a bit of military discipline into his classroom, teaching students to say "Yes, sir" and "No, sir" when called upon, and to rise whenever the principal enters the room, because "she's akin to the commander in chief."

Principal Barbara Ide is generally supportive of the new curriculum. Parents, she acknowledges, want to know that "there are some standards."And the Mayor "had to have something to show the public that he would make the public schools better."

Of course, no one is presenting the strengthened curriculum as a panacea. An even more dramatic reform for improving Nashville education could be charter schools. As part of his broader effort to reform government, Governor Don Sundquist called late in 1997 for the establishment of charter schools in Tennessee.

On this subject, of course, the devil is in the details. Some states have implemented charter school laws so restrictive that almost no institutions have opened, or those that have have turned out to be almost indistinguishable from routine public schools. That could happen in Tennessee if the Tennessee Education Association asserts its considerable political muscle. Already, the TEA has asked that only certified teachers be allowed at charter schools (no physicists teaching physics or businessmen teaching economics). This and other strictures, if agreed to, will deny charter schools the flexibility they need to innovate.

What will Tennessee's law be like? "We're putting it together now, and if we're going to be successful we have to be different than our normal school system," says Sundquist. "There has to be choice. Our goal is to give charter schools a chance to succeed, free of as many of the restrictions as possible. We're still working with the General Assembly."

Asked what other states his administration had studied for ideas on charter schools, the governor mentioned Minnesota and California. That covers a lot of territory: Minnesota is a place where charter schools are allowed a good deal of latitude. California's charter school law, on the other hand, is laden with so many restrictions designed to keep the power of teachers' unions intact that it offers little chance of improvement. "Hopefully the governor won't like what he saw there," says Vanderbilt University professor James Guthrie, a leading proponent of charter schools.

Guthrie knows of what he speaks. He taught nearly 30 years at the University of California at Berkeley before recently coming to Vanderbilt. He's anything but the usual "Berkeley refugee," however. With his steely gray hair and business suit he looks more like an executive than a campus radical. His office still seems bare—the most distinguishing features are small black-and-white pictures of John F. Kennedy and Warren Harding.

"My suspicion is the governor's enthusiasm is tepid," says Guthrie. "I don't think there is a pro-charter-school constituency here. The big problem Tennessee faces is that the populace isn't dissatisfied with the existing mediocre education." He notes that "In Nashville, cultural and economic elites don't go near public schools. I can't find a business leader here or a political leader who's got his kids in public schools." Overall, 20-25 percent of students attend private schools.

The business community, Guthrie says, is largely focused on improving *college* education. Their efforts could have a "trickle down" effect on the public schools, however, much the same way that the City University of New York's efforts to tighten admission standards encouraged local high schools there to improve.

How much difference would charter schools make? "I don't know that by themselves they will make the difference," says Guthrie, but they could provide a crucial incentive for improvement. "Then public schools will no longer be assured of their resources no matter how they perform. They'll have to scramble to satisfy their client." Currently, the incentives flow in the opposite direction, he notes, for public schools actually get more money (for "remedial" education) when their students perform poorly. That, he says, is a "perverse incentive system."

One other alternative to mediocre public schools is home schooling. Approximately 3,000 students are taught at home in the Nashville area, according to David Jones, who runs the organization that registers home schoolers as Tennessee law requires. It was only in the mid-1980s that home schooling became legal in Tennessee. Jones home schooled his own daughter before then anyway, and another family was actually prosecuted under a compulsory attendance law later ruled unconstitutional. The law was changed to accommodate home schoolers, though they continued to be viewed with suspicion by some school officials.

Jones reports that it took a while to convince educators "that we're not a bunch of loonies." But today the homeschooling parents registering their children through his organization run the gamut from lawyers and accountants to car mechanics. Prominent local families include those of champion stock-car driver Darrell Waltrip and Christian pop musician Michael Card. Most remarkably, says Jones, public school counselors even *recommend* home schooling for kids with excessive absences, or students who just don't seem right for their school.

Like a number of other Nashville institutions, Fisk University—one of the nation's oldest and most prestigious black institutions—has avoided succumbing to many current fashions. Students still live in single-sex dorms. They study a core curriculum. There is no "black studies" program. Even its Race Relations Institute, founded by the famed sociologist Charles Johnson, explicitly disavows the "kumbaya approach"—touchy-feely soul searching that is popular today—for cold hard facts.

Nationally, many black colleges are reported to be beleaguered today—struggling to keep enrollments up at a time when the original rationale for their schools (namely, to provide opportunity to students who can't get in elsewhere) no longer exists. But at Fisk, if you believe administrators, the school is anything but besieged.

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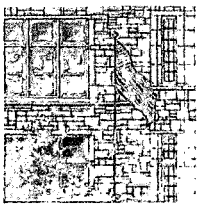
The school's executive vice president, George Neely, scoffs at the notion that the end of segregation renders Fisk obsolete. Seated at a conference table with Dean Carol Horton and Robert Poole, vice president for development, Neely sings Fisk's praises and its rich traditions. On the wall directly above him, portraits of past school presidents, black and white, clippings of the school's famed Jubilee Singers, and other school memorabilia underscore his point.

At Fisk, the key word is *excellence*. Its brochure listing "Ten Reasons Why You Should Study at One of America's Truly Great Universities" cites "small classes" and "solid programs." Race isn't mentioned or even implied. "What do you want us to say?" Neely asks from behind his Santa Clausian gray beard and stomach to match. "That we're a good colored school? People know what we are. We don't say, Come to a good black school to get good physics."

Fisk administrators boast that the school produces the highest number of blacks with science Ph.Ds. Fisk was also the first predominantly black institution to have a Phi Beta Kappa honor society. The school has no use for Afrocentrism or any other creed that subordinates excellence to racial rhetoric. Administrators make it clear that much is expected of students, that they can't spend four years simply affirming their black identity or complaining about racism. Examples are made of successful alumni like W.E.B Du Bois and Duke historian John Hope Franklin. Poole explains that Fisk will help students overcome the low expectations that the country's education system often imparts, but that the students need to work hard: "You better try or you're not going to be around here."

While charges of racism and bigotry are made rather promiscuously these days, none of the Fisk officials used either word in the course of a 45-minute discussion. This can't be chalked up to cautiousness—with his booming voice and unapologetic manner, Neely doesn't exactly pull his punches. Horton, though more demure, is equally direct. It just seems that harping on racism isn't the Fisk way. They seem to realize that finger-pointing isn't much of a personal improvement technique.



"Schools have moved away from academic excellence as their primary reason for being into a host of other stuff. This was my way of trying to put the focus back on academic excellence."

—Mayor Phil Bredesen

By sheer size, Vanderbilt University functions as ground zero for education in Nashville. Composed of ten schools—including medicine and law, Vanderbilt employs almost 1,800 full-time faculty and a total staff of 11,700, making it the largest private employer in the city. Its tree-lined campus stretches over a mile and a half, and more than 10,000 students are enrolled (roughly 6,000 undergraduates, 4,000 graduates). Behind the brain power is considerable financial clout: an endowment of $1.3 billion and an annual budget of $1 billion. All of this helped the school earn a *U.S. News & World Report* ranking last year of nineteenth in the country under the Best National University category.

At the head of this institution, and looking very much the quintessential CEO, is Chancellor (and former businessman) Joe Wyatt. Visitors enter his imposing office through a hall filled with huge oil portraits of his predecessors. In Wyatt's office, a book by journalist Nat Hentoff rests on the coffee table, a bit of an unconventional choice for a university president, given that Hentoff is famous for lambasting administrators for allowing the imposition of speech codes on their campuses.

"I try to keep my sensitivities up," he says explaining his taste. "The university is the front line of free speech," he adds. Vanderbilt has no campus speech code. It would be "antithetical to what we do and how we do it. I suppose it has never gotten to the point where someone did something that so aggrieved a substantial number of people that it was called for. There hasn't been anything like that since I was at Vanderbilt."

In other matters, the university is asserting some authority over behavior. After some bad experiences, the school this year barred alcohol in freshman dorms or at freshman functions.

Despite its size, Vanderbilt has a certain intimacy. It's also a school that, according to one student, has a decidedly conservative student body. The campus even voted for Bob Dole in the last mock election. Natalie Wheeler, a freshman from Ashland, Kentucky, says that "I came here because it's politically conservative" but at the same time varied.

Wyatt is a community leader. He recently served as president of the Nashville Chamber of Commerce and boasts of the school's close town-gown relations. One example is the work of education professor John Bransford. Trained as a cognitive psychologist, Bransford has developed computer programs designed to sharpen the problem-solving abilities of students. With a private grant he brought the technology to about half of Nashville's public schools. "We're building self-esteem not by focusing on self-esteem but by helping kids focus on solutions to problems," he explains.

In Nashville, education myths get punctured right and left. From Percy Priest Elementary School right up to ivied Vanderbilt there are valuable lessons for people in other places. Provided that, to borrow a phrase from the classroom, they listen carefully.

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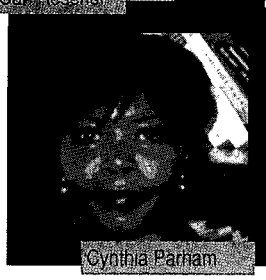
The Down and Out Are Headed Up In Nashville

By Martin Morse Wooster

Rev. Carl Resener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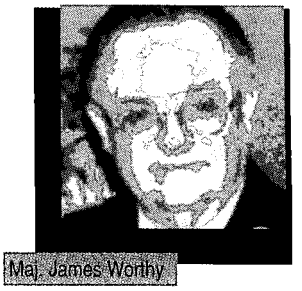
Maj. James Worthy

Spend any time talking to poverty-fighters in Nashville and two facts stand out. First, Tennessee's welfare rolls have been reduced by nearly a third over two years. Second, for poor people who want to become independent, many people in government, industry, and nonprofits are willing to assist them.

Nashville's poor have changed over time.The Reverend Carl Resener, director of the Nashville Union Rescue Mission, began ministering to the destitute in 1957. The typical person then seeking aid was a white male alcoholic in his mid-fifties who earned some money in the summers picking strawberries or tobacco but needed shelter during cold weather, while drying out, or while saving enough money to live in a single-room occupancy hotel.

Over the years, Nashville's underclass became younger, more ethnically diverse, and more heavily addicted to more dangerous drugs. Cocaine and heroin began to make their appearance in Nashville in the 1970s, and by the mid-1980s, a majority of the mission's residents were hooked on illegal drugs. The mentally ill, gradually released from the Clover Bottom mental hospital, often ended up on the streets. Generous federal aid—particularly Food Stamps and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) checks—ensured that the mentally ill or the addicted could live for months or years without needing a job.

"Why would you give a homeless man food stamps or SSI?" Resener asks. Increased government aid, he charges, creates a "lack of responsibility" that makes it much easier for the poor to live off welfare checks than to listen to the mission's preachers emphasizing the need for personal responsibility and salvation. Welfare "muddied up the waters," he concludes.

Resener's observations are seconded by Dan McMurry. Though a Middle Tennessee State emeritus professor, McMurry is no ivory-tower savant. In the mid-1980s, he spent a year crossing the country disguised as a homeless man, and he has taken his sociology students to study Nashville's slums for 30 years.

In McMurry's view, giving SSI checks and free health care to the homeless were "major, major reasons" why homelessness grew. Food Stamps also caused problems, since they could easily be sold for cash.

Two other important social changes have affected the nature of Nashville's poor—increased immigration and a rise in single-motherhood. Census Bureau data show that while Davidson County's total population rose less than 5 percent from 1990-96, the number of Hispanics increased by 51 percent, and Asians rose by 40 percent. Nashville still has a relatively small number of immigrants—about 7,000 Hispanics and 10,000 Asians, far fewer than the city's 132,000 African Americans. But immigrants show up in places you might not expect. Of the Salvation Army's three churches, for example, one is headed by Laotians and specializes in ministering to Southeast Asians.

Bill Towle of Catholic Charities of Tennessee estimates there are a total of 15,000 to 18,000 refugees in Nashville. By far the most numerous are the Kurds, who began to settle in Nashville in 1985. Attracted by the city's plentiful jobs and benign climate, roughly 5,000 Kurds live in Nashville, and more relocate from other parts of America every day. Most of them, Towle notes, are productive citizens who work hard and save for the future. "I continue to be amazed," he says, "by the number of Kurds who are able to buy homes after living here three or four years."

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Nashville's immigrant flows have been noticed in Washington. In October, Nashville's Metro Council petitioned the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to establish a district office here. Local hospitals are also petitioning the INS to help solve the city's nurse shortage by re-establishing a temporary visa program for nurses that expired in 1995. Under the North American Free Trade Agreement, Mexican and Canadian nurses can easily get jobs in Nashville, but professionals from other nations have to jump high hurdles before they can be hired.

In general, Nashville's immigrants manage to become self-reliant quickly, though some of the more desperate refugees require outside assistance for a time.

Single-motherhood is the other major factor affecting the city's poor. In prosperous neighborhoods like Belle Meade, Forest Hills, and Oak Hill, "nearly 95 percent of families have a father in the home," McMurry writes. But in Nashville's poorest areas, he found, as many as 75 percent of the homes lack a father.

Like most Southern states, Tennessee offers relatively low welfare benefits, from $95 per month for a family with one child to $232 for a family of four. From 1937 to 1995, the state's welfare programs remained relatively unchanged; they also allowed welfare recipients to collect aid indefinitely. Michael O'Hara, assistant commissioner for family assistance at the Tennessee Department of Human Services, notes that welfare was "a cash entitlement. The focus was—you get a check, and if you're eligible, you get a check forever."

After his election in 1994, Governor Don Sundquist launched a set of energetic reforms. In an interview with *The American Enterprise*, Sundquist noted that "When I was in Congress, I always heard that if states were freed to trim welfare there would be a 'race to the bottom.' But that's not the case. If you give the responsibility to the states, it'll actually be a race to the top, because we each want our state to be the best." According to O'Hara, the governor's task force specifically wanted to reject the failed job-training programs of the 1970s and 1980s, where recipients "trained" for years and never ended up in jobs. In addition, something had to be done to curb single-motherhood and to keep fathers involved with their families. "We looked at our caseload and found that 95 percent were mothers without fathers in the home," O'Hara reports.

By January 1996, the task force had come up with a reform bill. After intense debate it passed in April with only two dissenting votes and went into effect on September 1 as the "Families First" program. Its provisions include:

- A time limit of no more than 18 months of welfare at a time, and 60 months over a lifetime.
- A requirement that all welfare recipients sign a Personal Responsibility Plan, which stipulates that recipients help ascertain the fathers of their children, get absent parents to pay child support, and send all children over age five to school. In addition, all welfare recipients under 19 have to attend school and live with their parents.
- All parents with less than a ninth grade education, except those over 60 or with a child younger than 16 weeks, have to spend at least 20 hours a week in school, training for a job, looking for work, or at work. (This requirement will be tightened so that by the year 2000, participants will have to spend at least 30 hours a week in training or at work.)
- In 12 counties, participants may save up to $5,000 in Individual Development Accounts, which can be used to buy a home, pay for education, or start a business. (Prior to this, welfare recipients in Tennessee were barred from having more than $1,000 in savings.)
- Not complying with the new rules leads to increasingly severe sanctions. If children aren't immunized or miss school, a parent's welfare check will be cut by 20 percent. Failing to find or look for work results in an indefinite suspension until a recipient changes her mind. Recipients who voluntarily quit a job are ineligible for welfare benefits for three months.
- Some benefits—including day care subsidies, transportation subsidies, and health insurance for children—continue for up to 18 months after a recipient enters the workforce.

Families First is not a cheap reform. The Human Services budget was increased by $72 million, mostly to pay for more subsidies for child care and transportation. But Nelson Griswold III, vice president of Tennessee's conservative Family Institute, supports the extra spending. "After 30 years of handouts," he says, "the least we ought to do is to give welfare recipients a generous helping hand. If that means spending a little more, that's worthwhile."

Of all the provisions of Families First, perhaps the most controversial is the time limit. When the law first passed, Tennessee newspapers were filled with screaming headlines ("Welfare: Time Limit or Time Bomb?" read one in *The Tennessean*). But on closer examination, the time limit is less stern than it appears. Every Tennessee welfare recipient's "clock" starts no earlier than September 1996. This means no three-month welfare suspensions before March 1998, and no lifetime bans before June 2002. And it is quite possible the Tennessee legislature will extend the time limits in the next few years.

The time limit is also riddled with loopholes. Recipients over age 60 or with less than a ninth grade education are exempt. And even during the three-month suspension, welfare recipients will still receive some government subsidies, including child care, transportation, and health insurance. "The participants are not going to receive a letter from us saying, 'Bye!'" said Davidson County welfare administrator Willie Caruth. "We are going to look at each participant and make a decision in each case."

In the first 14 months after Families First began, the number of Tennesseans receiving welfare plummeted 36 percent, from 91,500 to 58,500. A similarly dramatic decline took place in Davidson County, where welfare rolls dropped from 11,600 to 7,600 during this period.

Several components of Families First are responsible: Nineteen percent of those

Associate editor Martin Morse Wooster writes often about philanthropy and welfare.

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leaving the rolls refused to sign a Personal Responsibility Plan. Twenty-one percent were cut off because of sanctions imposed by the program, such as failing to look for work. Twenty-nine percent found jobs. And 31 percent just asked to be taken off after the reform was outlined.

These dramatic declines took place with very little commotion. "The lines for emergency food have not swelled," noted reporter Quintin Robinson in the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*. "The streets are not overflowing with new homeless families. There have been no horror stories."

Experts debate why welfare reform has been so painless thus far, but in Nashville one cause is the many organizations and individuals willing to help the less fortunate. Most of Nashville's charity occurs personally and quietly. Nashville's richest family, the Ingrams, have a fortune estimated by *Forbes* at $3.2 billion, but the Ingrams perform their good deeds privately and not through a foundation. Most of the charitable drives now underway in Nashville are relatively modest. The Nashville Union Rescue Mission, for example, is seeking $800,000 to convert the top floor of a long-closed downtown Sears into a 41-unit single-room-occupancy hotel.

But philanthropy in Nashville is not just the domain of millionaires. Volunteers also assist the Families First effort. Nearly 600 people have signed up to be mentors who visit with Families First recipients weekly, learn about their problems, and try to help solve them. They then provide reports to the state government. Because government caseworkers only review participant files every six months, these mentors provide valuable information.

Many mentors come from churches. The Nashville Christian Women's Job Corps, for example, has seen 45 members train as mentors, and the Nashville Baptist Association plans to distribute mentoring information at each of its member churches this year.

Other Nashvilleans have switched careers to devote their lives to philanthropy. Charles Davis grew up in the Sudekum public housing complex, where most of the role models for young people were "drug pushers, thieves, or hustlers." A stellar basketball career at Vanderbilt University led Davis out of poverty and into 12 years as a pro, but he always wanted to return to Nashville and help improve local lives.

He began the Charles Davis Foundation in his first pro season. At first, the foundation sponsored summer basketball camps where campers heard from members of Don't Follow Me, a group of paroled convicts who teach young people to avoid crime. After Davis's pro career ended in 1993, he became an assistant coach at Vanderbilt. But his boss worried that Davis's contact with teenagers at the summer camps could be seen as illicit recruiting and in 1996 gave him an ultimatum—give up his foundation or quit Vanderbilt.

"There was no choice to be made," he says. "I made a contract to God that I'd never turn my back on my kids. It's more important to me to change a life than to win a basketball game."

Today, the Charles Davis Foundation has a staff of six and an annual budget of $500,000. Davis says he tries to show troubled inner-city teens that they don't have to stay poor forever by introducing them to lawyers, plumbers, engineers, actors, and photographers. "You never can tell what will set off a spark," he notes. One time he even brought in a brain surgeon—who brought a brain with him. "The first question the kids asked," Davis reports, "was 'Is that a white brain or a black brain?'"

Then there are businesses like Nashville's Dollar General Stores. Go into any inner city and you'll find relatively few shops. Most poor people have two choices: travel miles on buses to find a place to buy decent clothes or household items, or pay high prices for shoddy goods at local dealers. Dollar General would like to change this. Founded in 1939 in Scottsville, Kentucky, Dollar General is now a $2 billion enterprise with stores in 25 states. Dollar General's co-founder, J.L. Turner, had to drop out of school after third grade to provide for his family after his father was killed in a wrestling match; so the company has long taken an interest in advancing literacy. Walk into any Dollar General today and you'll find a brochure, signed by CEO Cal Turner, Jr., inviting customers to write to company headquarters for information on obtaining a high school diploma or learning to read.

Dollar General deepened its philanthropic efforts in the 1990s by opening four "learning center" stores in inner cities. Two of these are located in Nashville near big public housing complexes. They look like regular Dollar General stores and carry the same merchandise. They're also profit-making enterprises, although Dollar General donates half the profits to its nonprofit partners. But the goal of these stores is to free poor people from welfare.

Each store is run in partnership with the YWCA and United Way. Welfare recipients spend 20 hours a week in training, and 20 hours a week doing typical store jobs—operating cash registers, checking stock, and so forth. Derek Young, Dollar General's director of community initiatives, knows inner cities well, having grown up in a single-parent household in a St. Louis public housing complex. "We're not doing this to get employees," he says. "If someone says, 'We really like Dollar General,' we'll hire them. But we only hire five percent of the people who go through the program." In the first learning center store's initial three years of operation, 300 welfare participants entered the training program. Eighty completed the curriculum and entered the workforce. Twenty more decided to go back to school.

Young observes that the children of his trainees seem to apply themselves more in school. "It is usually the case that kids do better when they see their mama working than when they see her watching 'The Price Is Right' all day."

Proof of the stores' popularity came this past August. After an altercation with police, someone torched the store near the Sam Levy complex, burning it to the ground. The next day, 500 people marched on Mayor Phil Bredesen's office demanding the store be rebuilt. "People said, 'That's a horrible thing. That was a place where we could get some decent merchandise,'" Young says. A telethon, led by Mayor Bredesen's wife, raised $140,000, and a new store is scheduled to open on the site in March 1998.

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Goodwill Industries is a long-standing American institution, but Goodwill of Middle Tennessee has changed dramatically over the past decade. It's still a nonprofit that helps the physically disabled. It still runs stores where people can buy used clothes and furniture at bargain prices. But in the past decade, regional CEO David Lifsey notes, Goodwill's mission has changed. Most importantly, Goodwill decided to expand its mission to include job training for persons without physical disabilities. "Goodwill is just one big learning lab," Lifsey explains. "We can train people to do anything."

Barbara Morrison, the region's vice president for training, notes that Goodwill's 31 trainers are less burdened and more flexible than state workers. "Our caseloads are smaller, and we can approach each case by its specific needs," she says. For example, one man wanted to walk to work but not have to cross busy Charlotte Avenue. "That gave us a three-block radius," Morrison says. Goodwill found the man a job.

Much of what Goodwill teaches are responsibility skills: how to fill out a job application, how to dress for an interview, how to figure out the bus system, how to show up for work on time, how to avoid cursing your supervisor or customers. Goodwill's computer laboratories teach everything from elementary reading to Microsoft Word 6. Some of the computer time, Morrison explains, involves teaching ill-educated senior citizens about the electronic age—how to use an ATM, how to realize that computers won't blow up or melt down when you turn them on.

With Nashville's low unemployment rate, the walls of Goodwill's Job Source are full of help-wanted notices: A Holiday Inn offers successful applicants a $225 signing bonus. NationsBank needs 25 new tellers. A Kroger supermarket has scores of openings.

Not all the jobs Goodwill has are entry-level. They regularly place people in higher-paying jobs like transcribing medical records or transporting people in ambulances. Goodwill has plenty of work in its stores, but also contracts with other employers. Goodwill workers answer phone numbers on an 800-line at

Sessalie Johnson

In the first 14 months after Tennessee's recent welfare reform took effect, the number of residents on the dole plummeted 36 percent from 91,555 to 58,476.

the Corps of Engineers, file medical records at Veterans Administration hospitals, check bags at a local United Parcel Service distribution center, and serve as janitors in the Vanderbilt student union. In 1996, the Nashville-area Goodwill Industries placed 503 unemployed people in jobs. Of these, 489 were competitive jobs where the Goodwill-trained person was hired over other applicants.

The Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) is one of Nashville's largest employers, with a budget of $700 million and a staff of 9,000 people. But like most Nashville employers, VUMC had a hard time filling entry-level jobs. So in 1995, the VUMC Work Start program began. A year later, Work Start became a formal contractor with Families First, which sends welfare recipients to VUMC and splits the bill for the program.

Cynthia Parham, a Work Start trainer, explains that participants are put through a rigorous six-week, 70-hour training program. Requirements for entering the program are twofold: a ninth-grade education and a desire to succeed. "The drive," Parham says, "has to come from within." Failure to adopt successful work habits—showing up late for 8 A.M. classes, or being disrespectful to a supervisor—are grounds for instant dismissal, although a few participants have gone through the program a second time.

Much of the Work Start training consists of simulating what would really happen in a hospital job. Here's one exercise: Suppose you've nearly finished cleaning a room when a patient has an "emergency spill." Your boss asks you to clean the room again. Do you lash out at your boss, or do you clean the room again? "People at a medical center are under a lot of duress," Parham explains. "You have to understand that when your boss snaps at you, that it's not personal."

Support for Work Start participants doesn't end with the training program. Work Start trainers stand ready to help with personal crises, such as finding child care or an affordable car. And they're always ready to supply honest encouragement—cards when a Work Start participant is promoted, or on a birthday.

Sessalie Johnson is grateful for Work Start's help. She grew up in Nashville and had two years of premedical training at an Alabama college. She worked as a nurse's assistant, but raising her children alone wore her out, and she dropped out of the workforce. In July 1997, Johnson applied for Food Stamps, and Families First trainers sent her to VUMC. Johnson found that Work Start was a friendly and helpful place. For the first time in her life she was able to save money, and Work Start helped her find a 1987 car to replace her clunker.

In November, Johnson was hired by VUMC as a nurse technician, changing tubes on patients and drawing blood. She's only been on the job for a month, but already she's been promoted twice. Johnson is hoping to go back to school and train to be a full-time nurse. "I needed a second chance," Johnson says, "and Work Start provided it."

Between September 1996 and September 1997, 252 Families First participants went through Work Start, and 82 completed the program. Subsequently, 36 Work Start members were hired by Vanderbilt University Medical Center and two were hired by other employers.

It is hard to escape from welfare. But the evidence is clear: Many worthy and unheralded organizations in Nashville are doing their best to free people from poverty's snare.

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Car Town

By
Blake and
Julie Hurst

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"I've done a right smart bit of travelin', and the best place to live is middle Tennessee." So says Pete Johnson, owner of a "meat and three vegetables" restaurant in Spring Hill, Tennessee. Apparently Pete's affection for his region is shared by a goodly chunk of the U.S. auto industry, because nearly 20 percent of the manufacturing employment in middle Tennessee is now directly related to car and truck building, and the state is the third biggest producer of vehicles in the U.S. This is particularly dramatic when you realize that 15 years ago there was *no* auto industry in Tennessee.

Nissan opened the first auto plant in Tennessee in Smyrna, a small town about 30 minutes south of Nashville, and since June of 1983 over 4 million vehicles have rolled off its assembly line. Nissan employs 6,000 people in Smyrna—non-unionized—with a total payroll of over $380 million.

To tour the plant is to view a kind of industrial ballet. In one corner, 11 mammoth presses 100 feet long and three stories high stamp rolled steel into doors, hoods, and trunk panels. The presses run 24 hours a day, and if you are one of the folks charged with keeping these behemoths going, you know by the end of your shift that you've accomplished something.

Brent Leckner is such a person. A maintenance worker at the plant since it opened, he began his career working on heavy machinery at several northern auto plants. Leckner moved to Tennessee in 1981, and credits "the Lord for leading me down here." The Lord received a helping hand from Mrs. Leckner, who is originally from Tennessee. Brent took a pay cut from $16 per hour to $6 per hour when he relocated. But then the Nissan plant opened, where the present wages for maintenance men at the plant are around $20.

The Nissan plant is friendlier and less regimented than the plants he worked in before. As a contract employee in those northern plants, he was literally afraid to ask the workers on the line for help or directions. At Nissan, he rides Harleys with his supervisor. Leckner emphasizes the flexibility and the job security at the plant. When sales dropped precipitously in 1985, workers spent the slack time being trained for other positions. There have been no layoffs since the plant opened. Leckner is proud of the fact that the employees are "always inventing things to make our jobs easier." In fact, there are over 200 devices in the plant created by the people who work there.

In the plant's Body Assembly area, most of the work is automated. Six hundred robots do the welding, and in the most important part of the process 35 robots hold pieces in place while another 16 robots place hot welds. From here, the body goes to the paint plant. The cars are grounded and the paint is given an electric charge, so it sticks with remarkably little overspray. Charles Brambly is a supervisor at the paint plant and has

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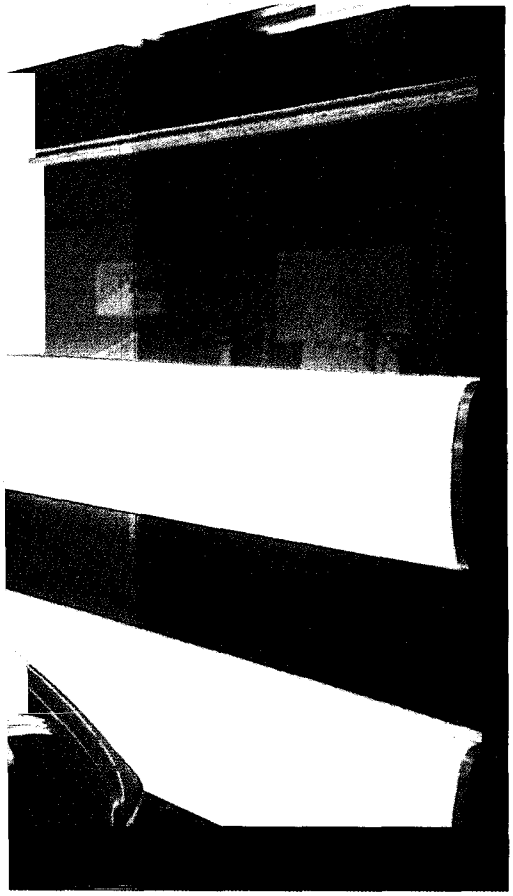

Shirley Johnson examines a freshly painted Nissan Sentra in the Paint Plant.

worked there since it opened. He has been to Japan for training, as have many of the people who work at the plant.

The body then moves to the Trim and Chassis area. Traditional assembly-line-type work takes place here, but with a few twists that are a combination of Japan and Tennessee. The workers are trained to do every job in their group (which consists of 10 to 20 workers), and they change tasks often. Beginning workers start on the night shift, and can transfer to days as they gain seniority. Some people prefer the night shift because, as one worker in the lunch line pointed out, "there are fewer meetings."

The plant is a marvel of complex organization. Instead of long runs of identical models, a Sentra may be followed on the Trim and Chassis line by a truck, with all the parts for each model arriving in the right place at the right time. Partsmaker Calsonics delivers 18 times a day to Nissan from its nearby Shelbyville factory. As Nissan worker Tony Holbert points out, this flexibility lends many advantages: "If one vehicle is not selling, we just make another one." Nor does this flexibility seem to harm productivity. The Smyrna facility is ranked as the most efficient auto plant in the entire U.S.

Blake Hurst writes often for The American Enterprise. *This is his wife Julie's debut in print.*

One river valley to the west of Smyrna is Spring Hill, home of the 8,450-employee plant that makes all Saturn cars. When it opened, the plant was the single largest investment ever made by an American company. Saturn was to be GM's answer to competition from Japan. From the labor-management agreement to supplier relationships to the way the car is marketed, Saturn is a complete break with the way General Motors has traditionally produced and sold cars.

Mike Bennett, former president of the United Auto Workers local at Spring Hill, is currently the UAW advisor to Saturn's Manufacturing Action Council. Though he's been at Saturn for more than a decade, his enthusiasm for the Saturn way of doing business hasn't waned. Bennett is the chief negotiator for the union, but he leaves no doubt that his job is something quite different from the standard UAW-GM confrontation. He sees his role as representing the UAW in the "managing of the business." It is a continuing process, because unlike the normal UAW agreement which locks in for a fixed term, the union-management pact at Saturn is a "living" agreement, with no expiration date and the ability to change at any time.

According to Bennett, each manager at the Saturn factory has a union counterpart in the same office, and all decisions are made together. The team concept must be working, because the Spring Hill plant is both one of GM's most efficient and highly ranked for customer satisfaction. Saturn is the first small car that has made a profit for GM in the last 25 years.

The folks at Saturn are particularly proud of the way their engine blocks and heads are formed. An exact model of the engine component to be cast is made of Styrofoam, and then packed in sand. Molten aluminum is poured into the top of the Styrofoam mold, and the foam disappears as the hot aluminum vaporizes it. The resulting engine block weighs only 47 pounds, and demands considerably less machining than traditionally-cast blocks. GM is beginning to use the procedure in its other plants.

The "Saturn difference" extends to the way Saturn cars are sold: at one list price all over the country, without negotiation. According to Nathaniel Mena, a salesman at the Cool Springs, Tennessee Saturn dealership who has also sold cars in the traditional manner, the Saturn no-negotiation policy is appealing to both sellers and buyers—particularly women, who buy half of all Saturns.

Saturn sales are down this year, and to battle the 10 percent drop, the company cut the price of its two slowest-selling models by $300 and $700 respectively. The company even rebated the price cut to customers who purchased the cars earlier in the year, leading to yet another batch of astonished testimonial letters on the bulletin board at the Cool Springs dealership.

When Nissan first opened its plant, only about 20 percent of the components in its Nashville vehicles were produced in the U.S. Now, 76 percent of the new Altima is U.S.-made. Middle Tennessee suppliers selling to Nissan and Saturn today range from single-shop companies making commodity items to multinational plants making everything from air conditioners to seats. All have moved here specifically to be near Nissan and Saturn.

Lead wheel-balance weights aren't a subject most people think much about, but these humble items are important, because if they aren't in the proper place on your tires, your new car will shake the fillings out of your teeth. Tom Worosz is the plant manager for Perfect Equipment in Murfreesboro, which supplies 98 percent of the lead weights used on new cars in the United States. That's 500 million weights a year from one unprepossessing plant located at the end of a short street next to a machine shop and a bread bakery.

But step on the manufacturing floor, or into the office of the company's one-man engineering staff, and it's clear that even a product as mundane as a tire weight takes a lot of '90s technology.

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The weights come in 2,500 different models and are computer-designed on a workstation. Lead comes into the factory from a battery recycling plant in the form of 2,500-pound trapezoids called "sows." Once heated to 600 degrees, the metal runs merrily through little troughs that lead to a series of company-designed machines that cast the lead and attach the metal clips that secure the weights to a wheel.

At about this point in our tour Worosz answers, unbidden, the question that may be uppermost in everyone's mind: After someone has worked here for a while, does he have trouble remembering the names of his kids? The answer is no. Lead cannot be absorbed, only ingested. So working in a lead factory is not hazardous so long as you practice simple hygiene. The tour is halted here, so everyone can go wash their hands.

When car companies began equipping their vehicles with aluminum wheels, changes in lead weight manufacture became necessary. When you combine lead, aluminum, and road salt, you have a battery. Pretty soon some rather icky corrosion begins to grow all over your once-shiny wheels. Perfect had to develop a means of coating their weights with a secret film.

Worosz is excited about wheel weights, and his excitement is contagious. We leave his workplace remembering that important innovations also occur in industries making things less flashy than semiconducters. When it comes to generating new ideas that subtly improve life for other people, Perfect Equipment is, well, no lead weight.

Nor is the Del-Met operation where Sean Swafford is employed. Swafford, 30, sports blue jeans, a Kansas City Chiefs sweatshirt, and a two-day growth of beard, and he answers phone calls from his boss with the salutation "hey, man." But a tour of his Portland, Tennessee plant leaves little doubt that he gets the job done. Del-Met is one of the few companies to win an "International Supplier of the Year" award from General Motors for four years running. A privately owned manufacturer of injection-molded plastic parts, with three plants in the middle

Photography by Jim Devault © 1997

The Smyrna, Tennessee facility is ranked as the most efficient auto plant in the entire U.S.

Tennessee area and annual sales of $100 million, Del-Met moved here from New York a decade ago. The emphatically non-union company makes parts for GM, Nissan, Saturn, and Toyota, and for a number of other companies who supply auto and truck manufacturers. Despite very low unemployment in greater Nashville it is not hard for the company to find workers, because Del-Met, like the other suppliers we talked to, pays above-average wages. Swafford is a believer in "participatory management." Each shift has only one supervisor, and there are only 12 salaried employees in his 160-employee operation.

Business is good at Del-Met, with two new molding machines going on line in recent weeks, bringing the plant total to 20. The plant runs 24 hours a day, six days a week. But supplying parts to the automobile industry is not easy. Del-Met is required to have a reject rate of less than one part out of every 10,000 they make, and it is expected to *lower* its prices each year. Most contracts are signed on a 3-2-1 basis, with a 3 percent price cut expected after one year of production, and price cuts of 2 percent and 1 percent in the following years. When asked what happens if he can't meet the price and quality requirements, Swafford gives a look reserved for slow learners and replies, "you won't be on the bid list next year."

Jerry Benefield is one of the people who require folks like Swafford to get a little better each year. As president and CEO of North American manufacturing for Nissan, Benefield is hoping that U.S. vehicle sales will remain near their present strong level of 14-15 million units a year. The maturation of the business cycle and the collapse of Asian currencies makes the outlook a bit cloudy, amidst intense price competition among small cars.

Both Nissan and Saturn are less profitable than the Big Three manufacturers of GM, Ford, and Chrysler, primarily due to product mix. Nissan, like other foreign companies, was slow to introduce sport utility vehicles (SUVs), vans, and trucks, today's most profitable vehicle classes. There won't be an SUV built at Smyrna until 1999. Saturn, meanwhile, is locked entirely into small cars, the slowest selling and least rich segment of the market.

When the decision was made recently to add a larger car to the Saturn line-up, an existing GM plant in Wilmington, Delaware, operating under a traditional labor-management agreement, was chosen to build the new model. That decision does not sit well with Spring Hill UAW leader Mike Bennett, who blames the national headquarters of his union for blocking an expansion of the pathbreaking Saturn relationship. Just as factory-level worker participation lessens the power exercised by management, it also weakens the power held by union leaders in Detroit. And with the relationship between the UAW and a downsizing GM having grown more antagonistic in recent years, the union is in no mood for innovative compromises. So it's back to the same old adversarialism. And in the long run, neither the "union nor the company will benefit," says Bennett emphatically.

This reversion to type leads one to wonder whether the Big Three and their unionized workers have really made the changes necessary to compete with Japanese counterparts over the long run. This year, the share of the U.S. auto market held by the Big Three fell to a record low of 71.6 percent, and if the economy heads south or America's love affair with trucks wanes, things could get worse fast.

Saturn is more efficient than the average American plant, but still not as ef-

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ficient as non-union Nissan is at Smyrna. Nissan produces 450,000 cars a year with 2,500 fewer workers than Saturn employs to build 300,000. Even after adjusting for what each plant buys elsewhere, and how they account for workers, there is still a huge productivity difference. Company-wide, it takes GM 3.5 workers to build each car, while Nissan makes do with 2.2. Although GM's productivity has improved from 4.9 workers per car in 1989, these lagging efficiencies will eventually tell in the competitive auto battles.

One way that the Big Three are attempting to become leaner is by outsourcing more parts production, which is good news to the Del-Mets of the world. GM has consolidated all of its component manufacturing companies into a single unit, called Delphi, which is now for sale. The auto suppliers in middle Tennessee tend to be small, nimble, and good at delivering products just in time. Their salary schedules are as much as $10 an hour lower than the car companies, but their bigger advantage lies in their ability to quickly change work procedures.

This leads one to wonder whether the Big Three and their unionized workers have really made the changes necessary to compete with Japanese counterparts over the long run.

When asked what makes Nissan the most efficient plant in the U.S., Jerry Benefield replies, with a twinkle in his eye, that he believes it is "superior leadership." But he goes on to credit his workforce, mentioning that it's important for "people to have some say in their workplace," because workers "know the best way to do their job." Benefield insists that "we get 110 percent out of our workers" (an impression our tour and employee interviews seemed to confirm), while competing managers in UAW-organized plants "beat 80 percent out of theirs."

In this, Benefield agrees with his neighbors Pete Johnson, Sean Swafford, and Brent Leckner. Middle Tennessee is a great place to live. And a great place to build cars.

MOON-EYED OVER SATURN

I'VE ALWAYS WANTED MY PICKUP TO START WHEN I TURN THE KEY, and move when I put it in gear. That's all. I've never formed an emotional relationship with any of my vehicles, nor the company that made them. The thought of writing love letters to GM, like many Saturn owners do, strikes me as a little odd. So I entered the Saturn visitor's center, a stately converted horse barn on the grounds of their Spring Hill plant, with more than a little skepticism.

In the stall to the right was a collection of trophies from the Saturn racing team. This is more like it, I thought. Screaming engines, high performance testing at the technological edge, the South's love for NASCAR, all coming together in middle Tennessee. Well, not exactly. The Saturn racing team drives *bicycles*, you see.

The next display describes how the trees growing on the plant site were saved and replanted during construction. We're not talking old growth forest with spotted owls in the branches. The land where the plant sits was once farmed, and is covered with second growth oaks and such. But Saturn has an image to sell, and bulldozers dragging trees out by the roots just doesn't fit.

Still not impressed, I picked up a copy of the Saturn Car Club quarterly newsletter. The newsletter is full of testimonials from satisfied customers and stories about the good deeds performed by Saturn dealers and buyers. It left me wondering if I have sufficient moral character to own one of the cars.

An initially irritating part of the whole Saturn experiment is their refusal to call a spade a spade. Union people are "represented workers," management types are "non-represented," and your boss is a "team leader." His boss is a "module advisor," and the guy selling the cars on the showroom floor is a "consultant." Somebody called the "Equal Partners Coordinator" is in charge of minority-supplier purchase quotas. Whoops, I meant "goals."

So I was not overly receptive when Kay Panek arrived to lead us on our tour of the Saturn plant. Panek is a long time UAW member who began her career in more traditional GM plants, as did almost all of the other workers at the plant (when Saturn opened, it was the largest peacetime transfer of workers in the history of the U.S.). After spending time on the line, Panek applied for her present job guiding visitors because, as she put it, "I've been building these cars for eight years; now I get a chance to show them off."

She's an inspired choice to "show off" the whole way that Saturn does business. We toured the plant in a golf cart, and every worker had a wave for our guide. I felt like I was in a TV commercial. But her devotion to the Saturn way of doing business is real. As she says, "We believe in that stuff that a lot of people think is hokey." Her dedication to the concept extends to a bluntness about labor-union relations. In her previous plant, where she was active in the UAW, she says the union "encouraged her to be irresponsible," and no matter what workers did, the shop steward could erase any accountability. Now, Panek takes "pride and ownership" in her work.

This leaves her disappointed with the decision to make future Saturns in a conventional GM plant. She doesn't want the Saturn name on a car that she and her co-workers didn't build in their special way. Panek clearly loves what she's doing. And I'm feeling a lot less skeptical about the experiment she and her fellow workers are conducting than when I first entered the horse barn. —*BH*

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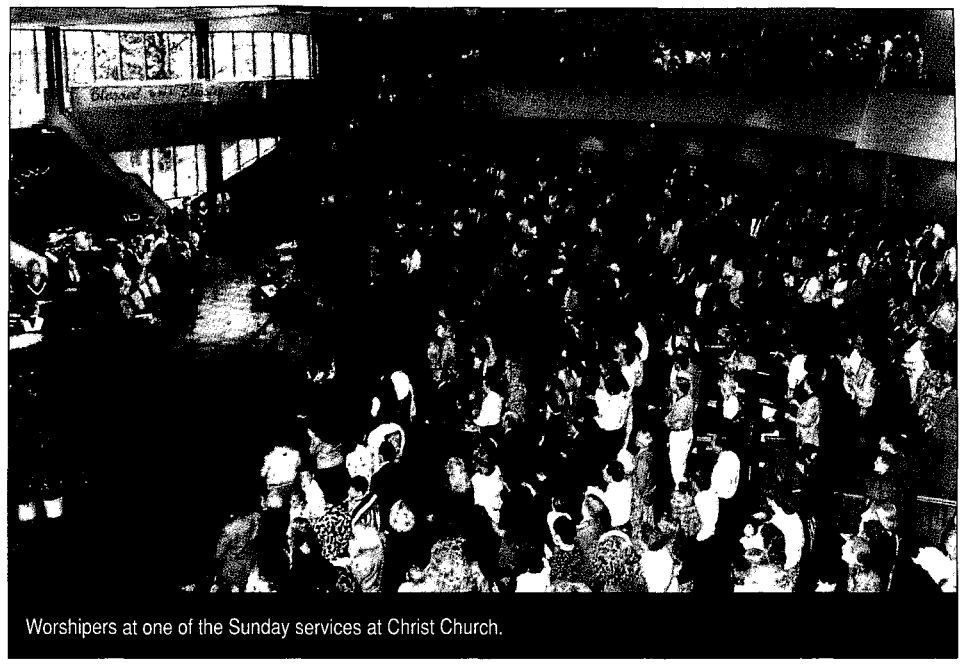
Transcript

WORDS WORTH REPEATING

THE GLORY OF THE ORDINARY

The following is drawn from the Reverend Stan Mitchell's December 14 sermon at Nashville's Christ Church.



Worshipers at one of the Sunday services at Christ Church.

If you're not careful, warned the prophet Isaiah, you'll miss God when he comes to earth—because He "will have no beauty that we should desire Him." He will arrive a long way from the throne, on the farthest outpost of the Roman empire, amidst the stench of a barnyard, as a very average baby cared for by a teenage girl.

And when Jesus stepped before the people as a humble carpenter-preacher, "they were offended," the Bible tells us. He was just too ordinary and too easy to dismiss—usual, medium, commonplace, average, middling, second-rate, undistinguished, indistinct.

John the Baptist introduced Jesus to the multitudes, saying "behold the Lamb." Can't you see the crowd as they turn and begin to scan, looking for that man who is head and shoulders above the rest, with the regal look of an emperor? Many of their eyes must have fallen upon this carpenter from Nazareth, but none fixed on him.

They missed Him for the same reason we miss Him: Because we live in a world that looks for the remarkable, for the record-breakers, a world that worships the profound and the magnificent. We all have a tendency to be disappointed if anybody tells us we're ordinary, because we've been taught all of our life that it's better to be among the extraordinary.

As a pastor I often have people come to me and say, "Stan, I want to serve God in an *important* way." Because they're not on the stage, they think their life is insignificant. And when this happens I think to myself, this faithful person has been misled. Somehow we have built a hierarchy that says these folks here are not quite as important as those really important folks over there.

Now some of you are going to look at me standing up here in the pulpit and think, "Easy for you to say!" And you're right. But don't miss the truth for looking at me. First Corinthians 12:18 says: "God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased."

If you've been a faithful spouse, are raising your children for God, giving of your means to others in need, serving God on your job, then you are serving in the body where God pleased to set you. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you. Nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

God says all members of the body are important, and those members of the body that don't get as much attention, those members of the body that we think to be less valuable—on these He bestows *greater* honor.

If I work hard studying for 20 hours, and I've taken my classes on public speaking, I'm going to get honored by the time a sermon is over. Likewise, people are going to compliment the singers, and pat them on the back.

But God said, I'm going to find those members of the body who operate faithfully in obscurity. I'm going to find those men whose motto in life is to do unto the Lord, even if they never get applauded on Earth.

I'm afraid we've made way too much fuss about the phenomenal in the church. I'm not railing on us; it's human nature. But we have improperly separated the phenomenal from the rank and the file. And Paul said when you honor the shiny surface and don't honor the real stuff beneath, you create a schism in the body.

That schism releases two complexes that are mutually detrimental. The first is an inferiority complex that drives people to me saying, "I wish I could preach because I want to do something significant." In other places we've unleashed a *superiority* complex. We've created superstars who think they're above the local church, who think they're above government, who think they're above the umbrella of authority. Usually, they end up destroying themselves.

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The world is thought to belong to the endless grinners, the back-slappers, the victorious people whose feet rarely ever touch the ground. Well, I myself would rather have the loving embrace of a faithful mother around one of our Sunday school children than the five-year stint of some flaming evangelist who burns out before all to see. Folks, when our Lord came to this earth, He spent 30 years as a normal Joe. When our Lord came to this earth, He chose the vocation of an ordinary carpenter. And nowhere do we see Him doing shoddy work on a customer's chair because He can't wait to get to his real ministry.

We see Him serving his father not only with the miraculous touch, but also in the woodworking shop. We see Him calmly, worshipfully, measuring and cutting, nailing and rasping, until one day, at the age of 30, he feels a gentle nudge to begin ministering and healing.

But even then I don't see Him frenetically trying to reach all the world overnight. I don't see Jesus saying "I've only got three-and-a-half years of limited ministry. I've got to get to the ends of the Earth all by myself."

I see Jesus steadily doing what God called Him to do. And when he could teach no more, I see him going home and going to sleep, because he knew that his call of God and his limitations were not contradictory.

And after three-and-a-half years of patient labor, He turned an unfinished work over to 12 men. And after 50 or 60 years, these 12 unfinished men turned an unfinished work over to a church. And the church, generation after generation, has been turning an unfinished work over to God, knowing that none of us can save the whole world, but each of us can serve faithfully today where we've been placed.

Now, nobody will gain—not you, not the church, not the world—if you think I'm encouraging you to do less with your life. That's not my point. I'm thrilled when God calls a young man or woman to be a high-energy evangelist in the ghettos or suburbs. I'm thrilled when a capable young person comes to me and says, "I feel a pastor's heart inside of me." I am all for gifted expositors and leaders. I am all for brilliant authors. I am all for wonderful singers who travel on the road 150 nights a year.

But I'm also thrilled by people like my mom and dad—people who, five miles down a gravel road outside of Paragould, Arkansas, in a little community called Spring Grove, looked at their yellow wooden house of 1,100 square feet and said, "This house is our mission field."

God uses our altars to call people to go around the world. Most of us, though, he simply calls home. When my dad, 16 years old, got saved in an Assembly of God tent revival—with God marvelously down there in that sawdust—I know that God's hand was upon him in a distinct cause.

My dad was a good-looking kid, had a lot of personality, could talk really well. So all the sisters in the church said "he's going to be a preacher." They began to push Dad, and at every fellowship meeting and youth rally they got Steve up to testify. And they'd gather around him with those coy looks and say, "God's calling you to preach, Steve."

But Dad never felt that. And so to many he was a failure.

How wrong they were. Because at the age of 19 he married my mother. At the age of 24, he became my father. He painted trucks and worked for Coca-Cola for nickels, and he came home every day after ten hours of hard work. Showing the light of Christ in a dark place, he would come home and love my mother like Christ loved the church, right in front of me.

And then he would put a ball glove on his tired hand and head out to our four acres, where he had worked with the tractor for days to smooth us out a ball field on the side of a hill. And until dark he would pitch the ball. In this way, we learned the love of Christ, through the love of a father.

And so when I heard the preacher say, "if your child asks for a piece of bread, will you give him a stone? How much more does your heavenly Father love you..." I knew that love.

And so I'm for the zealots, and the superstars, and the people standing at pulpits and in front of cameras. But I'm also for the loving embrace of my mother, who greeted me every morning and put me to bed every night, teaching me all of my days that Jesus loves me, until I could say, "I know."

Somewhere out there, God is preparing the next Billy Graham; but first he's calling a mother to wake her child in the morning with a song of Jesus' care. I'm thankful that the message the next great evangelist will project will have been learned on the knee of an obscure godly woman who heard and recognized her call.

Folks, if you have felt ordinary, if you have felt like you were just a notch above useless because you were a long way from the stage, I remind you of the carpenter. I remind you of our Jesus, who never made his living from the ministry. I remind you that the hands that have gripped your heart and re-molded you in salvation's glorious touch—those hands one day planed old wooden planks.

So live a life of integrity shining with the glow of Christ. Show that love to your children, give to others, help fill food baskets. Learn the trade of insurance, or whatever. That is most of our calling.

They tried to call granddad to preach, too. He didn't. He painted signs for 50 years in one sign shop. I drove him around town the other day looking at all the signs he had painted.

But my grandfather also developed a relationship with Jesus, invested something in my mother, invested something in my father, invested something in me. And three generations of combined character, experiences, and life in the church have resulted in me being called to the preaching ministry.

And yet, looking back, I can't remember one preached message I ever heard growing up. When I came here, I was embarrassed because Brother Hardwick asked me, "Who are your mentors?" And I couldn't think of a single preacher. All I could think of was Sunday school teachers and saints—names you'll never know—who, on the backside of a little Arkansas town, shaped me, prayed for me, and wouldn't leave me when I was seeking.

Ordinary people, who recognized the glory of the ordinary.

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In Real Life

FIRST-PERSON AMERICA

SOUL ON ICE

By Mayer Schiller

MONSEY, NEW YORK—As a rabbi, I teach Talmud daily in a Yeshiva. My outlook is decidedly apocalyptic, because I think our civilization's supposed defenders lack the fortitude these grim times require. But there's one thing I'm never gloomy about—sports: hockey, football, and soccer. Mostly hockey.

Camus wrote that he was never at peace off the soccer field. (Strange peace—he was a goalie!) I know what he meant. No matter what else is up or down in my life, sports is always up. Watching. Playing. Coaching. Officiating.

Since 1979 I have been involved with the Metropolitan Yeshiva High School Hockey League in various capacities. Currently I serve as commissioner. From 1991-95, I coached my school team to five consecutive championships. Oh, I've lost my share also. Heartbreakers, too. Lost the '86 championship in sudden death after we'd tied it up with 12 seconds to go. Lost in '80 in the semi-finals against a fourth-place, below .500, team.

I've celebrated with teams that have captured championships in dramatic fashion, and life doesn't have many sweeter moments. And I've been in losing locker rooms surrounded by wonderful young men, and in a bittersweet way those moments are special too.

But it's not just the winning and losing. I draw deep solace from the "tremendous trifles" of the game: The stats. The rules. The sound of the puck hitting the boards, of the referee's whistle. Game days become enchanted.

Sports, especially physical sports, are a refuge from many of the sicknesses of the modern world. They demand courage and masculine camaraderie. They are essentially romantic, in the deepest sense of the term, in that they create quests and beckon us to pursue them. Ruthless capitalism has harmed professional sports, but on the local level, especially in private schools or community leagues, these distortions are kept away and sports remain just that: sports.

Several years back I was coaching a team that was not given much of a chance of winning the championship. After each practice, when one of that squad's members would drop me off at my home, I'd ask him "So, David, are you going to be a champ?"

David was very far from being a "champ" in his school work and had just lived through his parents' messy divorce. His inevitable reply was, "I sure hope so, Rabbi, I sure hope so."

Well, we did win that championship. And on the night of the final game, when David dropped me off after the celebration, I turned to him and said, "Well, I guess you are a champ." He just nodded, kind of teary-eyed.

About five minutes after I walked in the door the telephone rang. It was David, and in a voice choked with tears he asked, "Rabbi, am I really a champ, really?"

"Yes, you're a champ. Forever."

"Thanks, Rabbi. I just wanted to hear you say that again."

Western civilization may be doomed. But moments like that make God's world infinitely sweet.

Rabbi Mayer Schiller teaches Talmud at the Yeshiva University High School.

CELEBRITIES

By Richard Kinch

LAKE WORTH, FLORIDA—Today was our first shopping adventure with our new baby, six-week-old Judy. Sallying forth into the stark reality of the local mega-mall has become our ritual of returning to the *agora* from the confinement of pregnancy and delivery. And we've had lots of practice—for Judy is our eighth child.

On this particular occasion it seemed that everyone took notice of our family of ten. Clerks, other shoppers, security guards, nervous merchants. After a while, my wife Holly whispered nervously, "everyone who sees us starts counting."

I had never felt self-conscious about our large family in our single-digit days. Often we'd get comments, but always positive. Today I wondered if we were leaving quaintness behind for freakishness.

As I shepherd this flock of blessings, nearly all my vital force is expended in mental factoring, trying to keep inventory: 8 kids. Two to the third power. Twice four. Four pairs. Half boys, half girls, nice balance. Seven ambulatory, one carried, her legs a-dangling down-o. They are eight compass points, with Holly and me in the middle trying to point the way north through a stormy sea of commerce.

After a dozen conversations with strangers, I finally understand: We are celebrities, not freaks. We are like movie stars. We cannot go out in public without having attention focused upon us. Some

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THE KINCH FAMILY 1997. Front: John (2), Mary (5), Christina (6), Holly, Judith (3 mos)
Back: Richard, Josh (14) Elisabeth (8), James (10), Caleb (12)

strangers will approach and speak, others just stare. They are transfixed, because we portray in flesh and blood a life few now know.

We can't quite grasp the reactions because we are just being ourselves. Unlike movie stars, we are famous not for what we have done or pretended to be, but simply for what we are, or rather for what God has made us to be.

Somehow we find a few gifts for Mommie, whose birthday is two days off, smuggling them from her as best we can. I shoo everyone outdoors to the van and follow behind. My eyes linger on the leading lady, the birthday girl, the fruitful vine. Her hair tosses in the breeze, and the little girls about her jump and skip. My own heart is lifted. I am joined to greatness, and the issue of that union is a blessing not just to me, but to all who are watching.

Richard Kinch is a software writer.

OLD DOG, SAME TRICKS

By Ray Wisher

GULF COAST FLORIDA—G. Gordon Liddy said it best: Prisons aren't institutions of correction; they are where antisocial individuals are put to keep them away from the rest of us. Our country suffers from too many high-minded theorists who can't accept the cold reality that some people shouldn't be allowed to roam free because they are criminals in mind and spirit. They may look like us, but when push comes to shove they act as they think—criminally.

Consider the example of Mr. Boone.

A couple of months ago a series of burglaries occurred in our city. Vacation homes managed by a particular company were targeted. The manager suspected two gentlemen he had let go; one was an older black male, the other a young white male. For a year they had been good employees, or so it seemed, and they had possessed master keys to all the homes for maintenance purposes. Suddenly they were caught with drugs, then were believed to be lifting money from the till. Not that they hadn't been paid well.

About a month ago a black man started robbing purses from old women in parking lots in broad daylight. The description was the same for all the robberies, including the getaway car. Then a white male committed the same type of robbery and was seen fleeing in the same vehicle.

Our department caught the two suspects, and they confessed to the burglaries and robberies: about 15 felonies committed by two people in less than six weeks. Interviewing the older man, Boone, I found him to be charming, intelligent, cunning, and absolutely without remorse. He told me he had been released 18 months earlier after serving half of a 20-year sentence for robbery and murder—a purse-snatching that went bad when the old lady fell down, hit her head, and died.

When Boone was released from prison, he found a job and for a while seemed to be headed in the right direction. But he didn't work in order to prepare for the future; he was more of an instant-gratification type. And so when he was fired by the vacation-home company, the difference between him and the rest of us surfaced.

He immediately began to "get even" with his former employer by ripping off the company's clients. When that wasn't enough to provide the money and drugs he desired, he went back to his old habits and began robbing elderly women, even though the last time he had done this he had managed to kill an innocent person.

In his final robbery in my town, the woman had been knocked to the ground as she fought to keep her purse. She managed to avoid serious injury (unless you count her anxiety every time she walks down a street today), and thankfully we were able to catch him before he could strike again.

This time, Boone was sentenced to 20 years—which means I'll probably see him in about ten to 12 years. So far, the scariest moment I've had with him was when he was talking to his girlfriend, who had been mixed up in the spree. She said, "You never told me it would end like this."

"Like what?" he asked. She dropped her head. "You going to jail." He paused for a moment and said, "We almost made it. A little while longer and we'd have had enough to get a fresh start."

No remorse. No idea that it's wrong to build your future on the victimization of innocent old women. Nothing. Unlike the rest of us, who might have tried a little harder to find honest work, Boone felt only one thing—disappointment that he didn't have a bit more time to commit more crime.

Police detective Ray Wisher is a regular contributor to The American Enterprise.

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the Left-wing Economist

A New Brainstorm From the Left

By Kevin Hassett

With all the politically motivated copying of conservative ideas going on in recent years, you might wonder what would happen if liberals ever acquired enough political power to enact the agenda of their dreams. *The Stakeholder Society*, a new book by influential Yale scholars Bruce Ackerman and Anne Alstott, provides an answer.

Ackerman and Alstott claim our society is unjust and getting worse. The problem is income inequality. To put poor children on a more even footing with wealthier children, they propose a radical solution: Having the government provide every American with an $80,000 lump sum of cash—with no strings attached—on his or her twenty-first birthday. This is the individual's "stake." Youths could use it to finance college education. They could start a business. Or they could buy themselves a couple of cars and one heck of a stereo. Their choice.

How to pay for this new plan? The money would come mostly from two new taxes. The first is a new annual wealth tax, which would require everyone with financial assets, no matter how small or large, to mail two percent of the value of all they own to the IRS every year.

The second revenue source is a "privilege tax." This Orwellian construction would charge wage earners a large annual lump sum for the rest of their lives, depending on how "rich" the family they grew up in was. If your parents were in the richest 20 percent of the income distribution before you turned 21, you will owe $6,500 a year. If your parents were in the 20th to 80th percentile, your yearly tax will be $3,275. Those whose parents were in the bottom of the income distribution owe $650 annually. To determine your privilege tax, the IRS will, when you turn 21, gather up two decades' worth of your parents' tax returns and then use them to set the sum you'll have to pay in tax for the rest of your days. In addition to helping to fund their "stake" scheme, the progressive "privilege tax" would replace the current payroll tax that funds Social Security and Medicare (which they believe bears down too hard on the poor).

This privilege tax would, of course, induce all sorts of crazy maneuvering. Parents would try to have employers pay them in years not counted in the calculation of their offspring's tax. Children would try to talk their parents into getting divorced if they both worked, in order to lower the relevant family income. It might even be worth the trouble to get adopted by relatives with less income.

By transferring income from those with financial assets to those who are age 21, current consumption would increase at the expense of current savings and investment. This would have a resounding negative effect on national growth; so wages and resources available to society in the future would be reduced significantly.

The reduction in savings would be exacerbated by the operation of the wealth tax. For someone holding a typical 5 percent bond, a 2 percent annual wealth tax is equivalent to a 40 percent income tax. Appended to our current tax system, this would raise the total tax on investment income for upper-income people to 86.6 percent. At that rate, many people would just buy fur coats instead of bonds and other productive investments.

The best way to lift wages is to give workers better tools, but the proposed distortionary taxes would guarantee that, over a period of years, investments in new "tools" would fall. And when economic growth slows, those at the bottom suffer most. In zapping the wealthy, the Alstott/Ackerman policies may decrease inequality, but they would also leave people at the low end of the income distribution with less food on their tables.

These authors argue, though, that income inequality is so horrible it is worth accepting broadly lower living standards in exchange for the knowledge that we live in an equalized society. By this logic, of course, seizing all of Bill Gates' assets and simply burning them would also represent progress.

What current liberals miss is the simple truth that accepting inequality today makes everyone better off tomorrow. In fact, a smoothly running economy *requires* inequality. If you want to convince people to undergo years of unpleasant training to become a skilled surgeon, you better compensate them highly when they start practicing. Pay surgeons no more than butchers, and you won't see much difference between what they produce. Use taxes to make chainsaw operators no better off than cashiers, and you have been unfair to people who risk life and limb to do their job.

By ignoring critical factors like these, and focusing enviously on income *differences* instead of the actual welfare of those at the bottom, liberal advocates of income leveling are the worst friends a poor person could have. If a just world is one that delivers medicines to children, food to the hungry, and opportunity to the able-bodied, then a just world requires policies that promote efficiency, not equality.

Kevin Hassett is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

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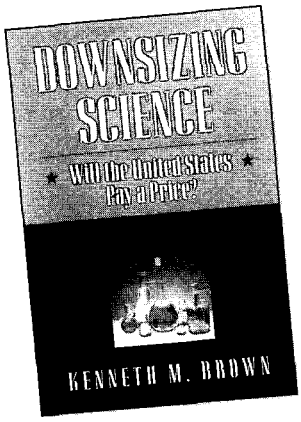

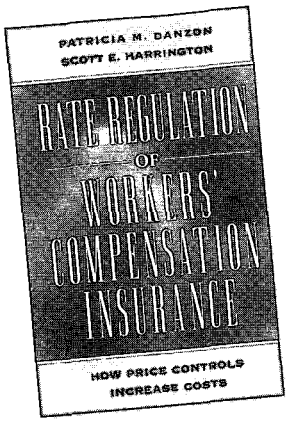

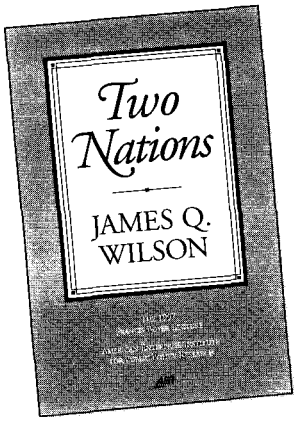

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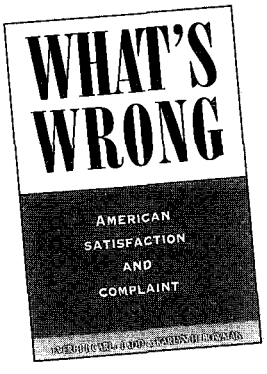

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Flashback

TO KNOW NOTHING OF WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE YOU WERE BORN IS TO REMAIN EVER A CHILD—*Cicero*

A Nashville Chronicle

Having sent men with unfortunate names like J. Carlton Loser and Bill Boner to Congress, is it any wonder that Nashville is best known for its cultural, rather than political, riches? But losers and boners aside, Nashville exudes history.

Andrew Jackson remains Nashville's first citizen. His estate, the Hermitage, is just east of town, and Old Hickory's diminished reputation—a product of his now-unfashionable brutality toward the Indians—has not slowed the stream of visitors. (The Hermitage giftshop does sell revisionist pro-Indian works as atonement.) Tourists are treated to a fine film about Andrew and Rachel Jackson—made possible, the tagline says, by Nissan.

Jackson's wife, born Rachel Donelson, was among the first settlers of Nashborough, arriving on a flotilla in the winter of 1779-80. (The settlement was named for a North Carolina martyr of the Revolution.) Rachel was vivacious and sparkful. As her type is wont to do, she married a painfully jealous man, one Lewis Robards.

In 1788, a young North Carolina lawyer named Andrew Jackson came to town. He boarded with the Donelsons, whereupon nature took its course. Rachel and Robards applied for a divorce, and Rachel married Andrew in Natchez in August 1791. Their newlywed bubble was burst by news that Rachel's union had not been officially rent asunder until 1793. Mr. and Mrs. Jackson properly rewed.

Jackson rose rapidly in Nashville's fluid society; he became a large landholder by swapping legal services for land. Tennessee (from Tinnase, a Cherokee chief) was admitted to the union in 1796; within its first three years of statehood Jackson served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Senate, and the Superior Court of Tennessee.

But the young man on the make had rabbit ears, not the best trait in someone who married under dubious circumstances. He was also an erratic shot—an unfortunate quality in a man ever ready to resort to the Code Duello. Messy clashes were inevitable.

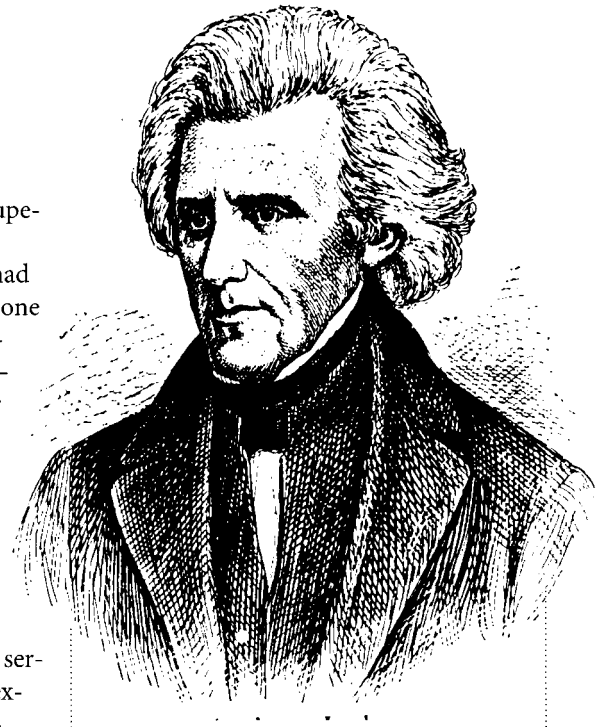
In 1805, Jackson met his political rival, Governor John Sevier, on the streets of Knoxville. They quarreled. Jackson proclaimed his services to his country. To which Sevier replied, "Services? I know of no great service you have rendered the country, except taking a trip to Natchez with another man's wife."

This was unwise. "Great God! Do you mention *her* name?" exclaimed the affronted husband.

For better or worse, Andrew Jackson was not the sort to chew things over for a few days and tell Sevier, "Look, John, violence never solved anything; can't we just work this thing out?" Rather, he published his challenge in the newspaper: "Know ye I Andrew Jackson, do pronounce, publish, and declare to the world, that his excellency John Sevier...is a base coward and poltroon."

A duel was scheduled. Sevier showed up late, an enraged Jackson charged him on horseback, sword drawn, as the governor, wise to the better part of valor, hid behind a tree. Cooler heads convinced the combatants to call the whole thing off.

Rachel's honor would again and again impel Jackson to action, but only once would the pistol smoke: in 1806, when he killed a man who had profaned *her* name. "I'll take my time, aim deliberately, and kill him if it's the last thing I do," Jackson announced. Exhibiting preternatural calm, he allowed Charles Dickinson to fire first. The shot entered Jackson's chest. Whereupon Jackson took aim and coolly slew his adversary.



AN ENRAGED JACKSON CHARGED ON HORSEBACK, SWORD DRAWN, AS THE GOVERNOR, HID BEHIND A TREE.

Tennessee produced three presidents in three decades, and the relative esteem in which they are held is in proportion to the majesty of their monuments on the Capitol grounds. Jackson's equestrian statue is most prominent; a few yards away are the tombs of Mr. and Mrs. James K. Polk. Our eleventh president, who died in Nashville barely three months after leaving office, is nicely eulogized: "The beauty of virtue was illustrated in his life;

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The excellence of Christianity was exemplified in his death." Polk, baptized into Methodism on his deathbead, died of the chronic diarrhea that tormented him throughout his single term.

The least impressive—indeed, positively grudging—presidential cenotaph is to Andrew Johnson, the populist East Tennessee tailor who acted as the Volunteer State's military governor during the War Between the States. His statue bears no flowery epitaph unto the un-favorite son: it's just the facts, ma'am.

Tennessee was the 11th and last state to secede from the Union—over the objections of Andrew Johnson's mountainous east, a Union bastion which has remained a Republican stronghold ever since. The yeomen of the east did not wish to shed blood for the slavocracy. The 1860 census revealed that whereas 40 percent of West Tennessee was slave, and one-quarter of the Nashville-Middle Tennessee region was composed of bondsmen, East Tennessee's slave population was just eight percent.

In February 1862, Nashville became the first major city of the Confederacy to fall to Union forces. After the war, it was a model of the New South, with a prosperity fueled by railroads and steamboats. Boosters fancied it the "Athens of the South," and it was postbellum Northern philanthropy that endowed such institutions of learning as Fisk University, Peabody Normal School, and, most famously, Vanderbilt University.

The "Central University of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South" was born in 1872. That mouthful was replaced by the pithier Vanderbilt University when Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, the colorful buccaneer who rode the New York Central Railroad into the wealth of Croesus, gave the school a shade under a million dollars.

The Commodore didn't exactly gush with the milk of human kindness. He kept his cigars in a pocket rather than a cigar case so that when he removed one, "my friends don't know whether there are any left" to share.

In 1869 the 75-year-old Commodore married Frank Armstrong. No, this wasn't a Hawaii marriage; Frank's parents had pledged to name their firstborn, y chromosome or not, after a family friend. The new Mrs. Vanderbilt's beloved cousin was married to Bishop McTyeire of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and Frank and the Bishop persuaded the aging magnate to subsidize what became one of the greatest schools of the South.

"Vanderbilt University," summarizes its historian, Paul K. Conkin, "like most other American private universities, was born of an unholy marriage of piety and plutocracy."

This mésalliance is best known for producing an orphan. In the years after World War I, a handful of students and faculty launched a journal of poetry known as *The Fugitive*. Four of these Fugitives—Donald Davidson, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and John Crowe Ransom—would later become prominent poets and novelists and critics, but first they would form the nucleus of the most profoundly radical (or was it reactionary?) intellectual movement of the era: Southern agrarianism.

In 1930 a dozen agrarians, ten of them Vanderbilt men, contributed essays to the book *I'll Take My Stand,* a lyrical and tenacious defense of the pre-industrial South. "The culture of the soil is the best," argued the authors, who were mocked as "typewriter agrarians" by H.L. Mencken.

Vanderbilt's chancellor was not amused. As Conkin notes, "The Agrarians launched a massive attack upon corporate America, the very source of most of Vanderbilt's gifts and most of its board members." Many Vanderbilt folk were still red-faced over the recent Scopes monkey trial that took place just down the road; the last thing they wanted their school associated with was an intellectual defense of rural provincialism.

The dear old alma mater disowned its wayward sons. The sons responded in kind: poet Tate denounced the school as "an institution which combines the qualities of a whorehouse and a graveyard." Paul Conkin writes, "Only years later did Vanderbilt claim, and then exploit, the achievements of those who ultimately provided its best claim to national recognition."

If art and commerce clashed at Vanderbilt, they conjoined downtown, where the Grand Ole Opry was broadcasting agrarianism in vulgate. In 1925 the Nashville-based insurance giant National Life and Accident started a radio station and christened it WSM (for "We Shield Millions," the company's motto). One Saturday evening, after a classical broadcast, WSM announcer George D. Hay introduced a sexagenarian fiddler by drawling, "Ladies and gentlemen, for the past hour we have been listening to music taken largely from Grand Opera, but from now on we will present 'The Grand Ole Opry.'" The rest was history.

If an insurance man like Wallace Stevens could make poems, National Life and Accident could nationalize an art form. In 1928 WSM was assigned a "clear channel," which meant its nighttime programs could then be heard across much of America, and over the next two decades Nashville established itself as the recording capital of what came to be known as country music.

While Grandpa Jones may not seem the likeliest fruit of the Athens of the South, the genteel Nashville (as limned by the short-story writer Peter Taylor) is in no position to snicker. When I ask if society Nashville is embarrassed by the garish side of country music, Nashville novelist Walter Sullivan explains, "Nobody's ever so embarrassed by money that they don't want it. Some of the oldest Nashville money came from the insurance company that owned [WSM]." Among those enriched was Jesse Wills, a Fugitive poet.

In today's Nashville, coal miners' daughters share the stage with the likes of Mary Chapin Carpenter ("I'm proud to be a *Life* magazine executive's daughter..."), but the music endures, thanks to the interplay of traditionalists and innovators. *I'll Take My Stand* remains as fresh as ever. Vanderbilt is a heralded university, not a robber baron. The Hermitage is the third-most-visited presidential home, even if Jacksonian Democrats are hard to find. And every Saturday night, the Grand Ole Opry comes to you live, straight outta Nashville, a city that deserves its many boosters.

—Bill Kauffman

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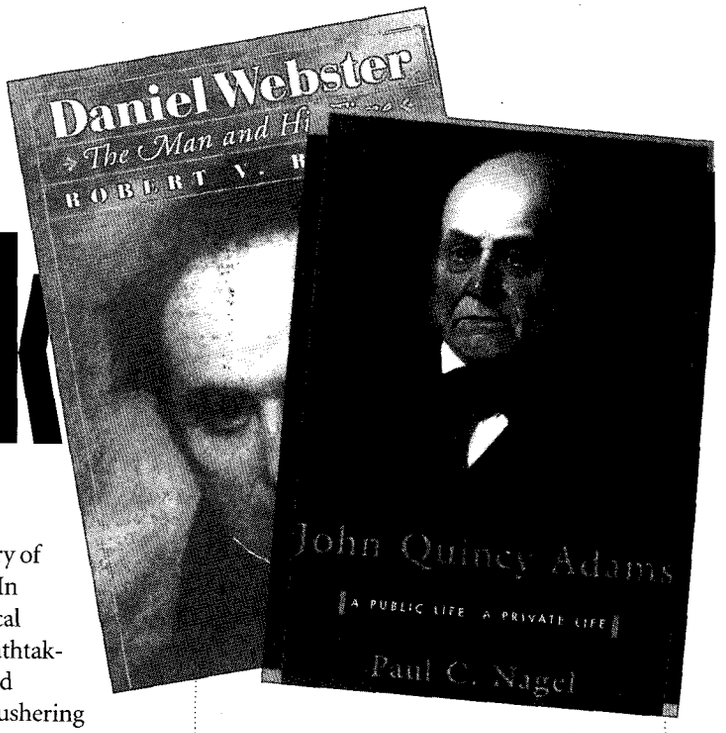
BookTalk



THE PROFLIGATE AND THE PURITAN

By Richard Norton Smith

Daniel Webster: The Man and His Time
By Robert Remini
Norton, 796 pages, $39.95

John Quincy Adams: A Public Life, a Private Life
By Paul Nagel
Knopf, 432 pages, $30

In introducing his magisterial biography of Daniel Webster, Robert Remini laments the creeping historical illiteracy that threatens to engulf Webster and his contemporaries. All the more reason, then, to be grateful to Professor Remini, the nation's leading Jacksonian scholar, for reminding us of a time when eminent historians still wrote for the general educated reader. Remini's research is impeccable, his storytelling on a par with his outsized subject.

And what a story he has to tell. Whoever said that you can't tell a book by its cover has yet to encounter *this* cover, with Francis Alexander's brooding, faintly satanic image of Black Dan that reminded one Webster admirer of "a thunderstorm in July." In his trademark blue coat, buff waistcoat, black trousers, and broad-brim hat, the beetle-browed orator might have stepped out of a revolutionary history book.

To Ralph Waldo Emerson, his fellow Yankee was "a man of the past, not a man of faith or of hope." For once, the Sage of Concord erred on the side of pessimism. For the fact is, Webster's political conservatism, enshrined in his Plymouth and Bunker Hill orations, gave his countrymen something important for their future—nothing less than "a history of their origins as a nation." In addition, Webster's political outlook presaged the breathtaking nationalism that defied Southern nullifiers while ushering in a truly modern American economy.

Before Webster the statesman there was Webster the lawyer. Remini dramatically recreates such pivotal courtroom battles as the famous Dartmouth College case and *McCulloch* v. *Maryland* to show how Webster, in league with Chief Justice John Marshall, stamped the young Constitution as a warrant of national over state authority. By limiting state power over corporations, Webster the economic nationalist helped lay the groundwork for his country's astonishing post-Civil War development. As Secretary of State under three Presidents, he established diplomatic precedents that would be cited at the Nuremberg trials and in justification of Israel's 1976 raid on Entebbe airport.

Walking about the Capitol grounds one moonlit night, the great man declared his hankering after glory, without which life did not seem worth living. "Your quiet way of looking at things may be best, after all," he told a friend, "but I have sometimes such glorious dreams!" This was no exaggeration. Webster dreamed of a great commercial power, bonded, despite sectional differences, through an almost mystical Unionism. He felt equal reverence toward those whose social position rested upon merit and those who obtained it from accumulated riches. This alone, Remini points out, left Webster out of step with Jacksonian America. Spellbound audiences might cheer his words, but they rarely gave him their votes, still less their trust.

In this age of focus-group-tested soundbites, it is hard to imagine voters devouring Websterian oratory in four-hour doses. Yet the Massachusetts Senator fairly earned his title as the Demosthenes of America, employing an oaken eloquence that has not lost its power to move nearly two centuries later. Unfortunately, the godlike Daniel was also a creature of wretched personal excess, whose politics were more moderate than his appetites. He may or may not have fathered mulatto children; beyond doubt is his mercenary relationship to commercial interests who regularly and generously subsidized his advocacy. At the State Department Webster was not above selling offices to support his seaside Xanadu in Massachusetts, and his extravagance left him constantly in debt.

Not surprisingly, Webster's private life was an emotional train wreck. After burying his first wife he was quick to remarry —to a woman whose family took pains to protect her fortune from his mismanagement. Amid gossip that his marriage was on the rocks, the aging orator suffered a shattering loss in February 1848: His son Edward died in the Mexican War, a conflict the senior Webster viewed as a stain on American honor. (Only one of Webster's five children would survive him.) Soon after, Webster made an alcoholic spectacle of himself, interrupting a Washington opera performance with a lusty rendition of "Hail Columbia, Happy Land." Even in his cups, Black Dan was a thoroughgoing patriot.

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Webster's greatest lust was for office—above all for the presidency, to which he thought his superior talents entitled him, yet which kept going to other, lesser men, in particular the military heroes the Whig party was forever nominating in a cynical attempt to emulate Jackson's popular appeal. "I'm afraid my luck is always bad," wrote a self-pitying Webster, "and I fear is always to be so." Hounded by creditors, deserted by erstwhile admirers, he summoned enough verbal magic in March 1850 to deliver a powerful appeal to Union supporters, albeit one whose endorsement of a fugitive slave law left him permanently alienated from Northern abolitionists.

Even then the cancer of ambition ate into Webster's soul as ravenously as the cirrhosis that ultimately destroyed his liver. "You ought not to die," remarked one Southern adversary after hearing Webster's immortal tribute to Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable: "a man who can make speeches such as that ought never to die." Thanks to Professor Remini, the greatest member of the Great Triumvirate that included Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun still lives, as complex and irresistible as the expansive host presiding over the senatorial hideaway known as Webster's Wine Room.

To John Quincy Adams, Webster possessed "a rotten heart" corrupted by love of money. But Adams' relentlessly critical Puritan conscience led him to be harsher on no one more than himself. Making extensive use of JQA's unpublished diaries, Paul Nagel, in his moving new life of Adams, dispels the popular image of our sixth President as a crabbed and self-righteous aristocrat, "King John II," languishing in the historical backwater of Andrew Jackson. Without ever stooping to psychobiography, a sympathetic Nagel demonstrates that Adams was not dyspeptic but depressed, his lifelong feelings of inadequacy implanted early by a demanding mother, who could notify her 11-year-old son that "dear as you are to me, I had much rather you should have found your grave in the ocean you have crossed, or any untimely death crop you in your infant years, rather than see you an immoral profligate or a graceless child."

John Quincy would spend a lifetime grappling with the monster of his own ambition. The struggle produced perhaps America's finest diplomat; one of her least politically gifted chief executives; an indifferent poet who was forever bemoaning his choice of politics over literature; and a classically educated street brawler who rose each morning before the sun, read a chapter of the Bible, and complained that his official duties deprived him of his old friends Cicero and Tacitus. To an English diplomat who had the misfortune to sit across from Adams at a negotiating table, his American counterpart was "a bulldog among spaniels."

Nagel does not shy away from Adams the disastrous parent and often distant husband. "Do not be hurt at any expression," Adams' wife Louisa urged one of her sons as the elderly JQA made a spectacle of himself by his anti-slavery activities in Congress, "for his mind is too much engrossed by self to remember or enter into the feelings of others." Moving in an opposite trajectory from Webster, Adams gained authority with age. Office-seeking gave way to moral witness. King John II became Old Man Eloquent.

On February 12, 1848, Adams collapsed at his desk on the House floor. He was carried to the Speaker's office, where he died two days later. It was left to an old Jacksonian, Thomas Hart Benton, to deliver the most suitable benediction upon George Washington's political heir.

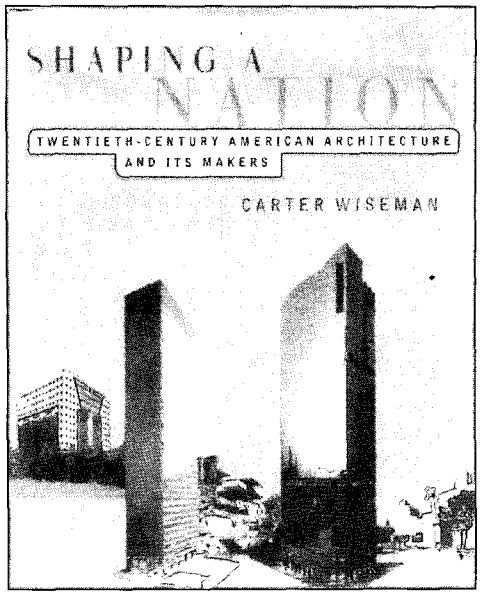
"Where could death have found him but at the post of duty?" asked Benton. It was an epitaph that even an Adams could appreciate.

Richard Norton Smith's most recent biography is The Colonel: The Life and Legend of Robert R. McCormick. *He is director of the Gerald R. Ford Library.*

ARCHITECTS BEHAVING BADLY

By Philip Langdon

Shaping a Nation: Twentieth-century American Architecture and Its Makers
By Carter Wiseman
Norton, 387 pages, $39.95



Twenty years ago, American architecture seemed poised for a dramatic recovery. Bauhaus-style Modernism, which had imposed a stern rigidity on much of the country's corporate and institutional architecture, lay as fallen and shattered as Humpty Dumpty. In every corner of the nation, architects were being implored to pursue a less abstract, more humanistic way of shaping buildings. Historic preservationists were urging designers to make buildings fit in with, rather than stand out from, venerable older structures. All at once, it seemed, architecture was stirring popular enthusiasm.

Then came a series of disappointments. Cynics in high places, such as superdesigner Philip Johnson, who described himself as "a whore" for developers and yet continued to win respectful coverage in the *New York Times*, rendered the emerging "post-modern" architecture so glib that the new style became embarrassing. By the 1990s, cutting-edge architecture had moved on to novelties largely irrelevant to the country's needs.

Carter Wiseman, former architecture critic for *New York* magazine and author of a previous book on I.M. Pei, traces this debacle without illusion, showing just how far some of the profession's leading figures have departed from good sense. Wiseman's book spans the entire century, but it's really the last 30 years—the period from the ascent of Philadelphia architect Robert Venturi to the lionization of Los Ange-

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les' Frank Gehry—that makes compelling reading.

Venturi's story is one of thumbing his nose at his Modernist elders and finding inspiration in sources that "serious" architects were once forbidden to appreciate: the Las Vegas strip and the familiar Main Street, along with the twisting of tradition in the form of Italian Mannerism and the Baroque. After causing outrage among doctrinaire architects in the 1960s, Venturi soon became a favorite of students and of that kingmaker of architectural reputations, art historian Vincent Scully of Yale. Practically overnight, the erudite young Philadelphian went from outsider to major figure.

Venturi has often been heralded for "enriching" contemporary architecture—opening it up to historical influences that Modernists had tossed in the trash bin. Wiseman, however, detects the smirk on Venturi's face. From Venturi's earliest years, when he put a nonfunctional gold anodized aluminum TV antenna on top of an apartment building for the elderly (a symbol, he said, of old people's lives), the Princeton-trained designer has indulged, according to Wiseman, in "an implied retreat from architecture's traditional role as a communicator of communal messages and values." Though Venturi made it easier for designers to inject tradition and complexity into their work, this has all too often been an intellectual parlor game, empty of heartfelt conviction or high purposes. Venturi has failed, in Wiseman's view, to fulfill a crucial purpose of buildings: that of "satisfying an enduring human need, validated in architecture over centuries, for aspiration."

Venturi is hardly alone. In recent years, intensely self-promoting coteries of architects have gone off on strange tangents that ignore the public's desire to have buildings express important, understandable *meaning*. Frank Gehry, his remarkable artistry notwithstanding, has avoided producing an architecture that stands for an uplifting credo, the way Classical architecture in nineteenth-century America stood for the country's highest civic ideals. Wiseman stresses the aloofness and outright hostility exhibited by many of today's architects who have an academic or avant-garde orientation. The effect, for example, of avant-garde New York architect Peter Eisenman's Wexner Center for the Visual Arts at Ohio State University, where columns from the ceiling inexplicably stop short of the floor, is, says Wiseman, "disorienting, if not actually threatening." The behavior of Eisenman and his comrades illustrates a disturbing phenomenon, says Wiseman: famous members of a public profession "speaking almost entirely to each other."

The situation is not entirely forlorn. Classicism has enjoyed a modest revival, grounded in a few receptive institutions like the University of Notre Dame. Cesar Pelli in New Haven, William Pedersen in New York, and a number of other designers have produced appealing buildings without abandoning Modernism. More encouraging yet, there has been a widespread reassessment of the goals and strategies of urban design; the New Urbanists are attempting to form streets and other public places that help overcome the American trend toward separating into mutually exclusive enclaves. Still, the leading architecture schools continue to concentrate on styles that set the artistic elite apart from the nation as a whole.

One of this volume's contributions is its attempt to give non-Modernist buildings from the first half of the twentieth century a legitimate place in architectural history. Most traditional buildings from the 1920s onward were erased, with almost Stalinist rigor, from the architectural surveys produced during Modernism's heyday. Wiseman's choices of which non-Modernist buildings to welcome into the pantheon are thought-provoking, though not definitive. They draw heavily on the Boston-to-Washington corridor, perhaps because Wiseman, a consummate Ivy Leaguer who now edits the *Yale Alumni Magazine,* is not very familiar with much of the nation. A related flaw is that Wiseman focuses almost entirely on the top designers, thus providing little sense of what the profession as a whole has been doing.

Neither of those shortcomings is calamitous. Wiseman is a clear, vigorous, and refreshingly independent critic, and his book is impressive for its truth-telling. He puts our century in intelligent perspective, and he never fails to apprise us when the emperors of architecture are wearing no clothes. *Shaping a Nation,* with its disdain for pretense and self-absorption, leaves us with a vision of how far this critical profession has strayed from its responsibilities.

TAE *associate editor Philip Langdon was previously a senior editor at* Progressive Architecture *magazine.*

WERE OUR FOUNDERS HYPOCRITES?

By Daniel J. Mahoney

Vindicating the Founders: Race, Sex, Class and Justice in the Origins of America
By Thomas G. West
Rowman & Littlefield, 218 pages, $22.95

Thomas G. West aims at nothing less than re-establishing the moral authority of the Founding Fathers against the orthodoxy of today's revisionist historians. These critics assert that our nation was founded not on self-evident truths about human liberty and equality, but on a systematic desire to exclude blacks, women, and the poor from participation in a self-governing community.

The nub of the matter, of course, is slavery and the alleged failure of the Founders to recognize its evil character and abolish it swiftly. John Hope Franklin, the African-American historian who heads President Clinton's "National Conversation on Race," expresses the contemporary hostility to our founding when he asserts that "Jefferson didn't mean it when he wrote that all men are created equal. We've never meant it. The truth is we're a bigoted people and always have been." With some notable exceptions, this view dominates contemporary scholarship and forms the backbone of civic education for young Americans today.

But West shows that these historians are wrong—wrong because they fail to approach these matters from the Founders' point of view, and wrong because they

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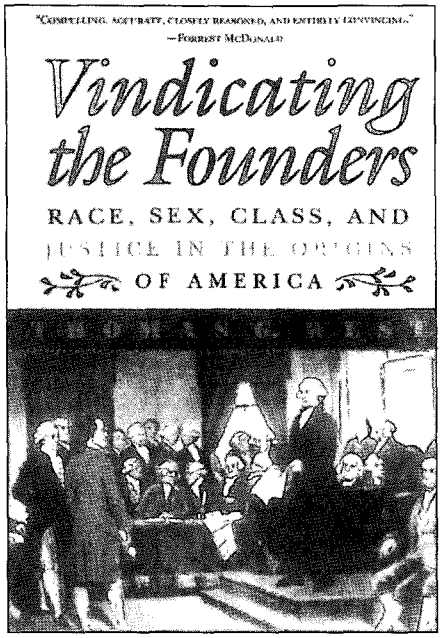
are blind to the moral prudence that guided the Founders' political art. No important Founder disagreed with the principle that slavery is wrong because it denies the slave's humanity. The Founders knew, however, that this principle did not settle the practical question of how to eliminate such a deeply ingrained practice. As both Lincoln and Frederick Douglass later recognized, the Founders opposed inserting immediate abolition into the Constitution of 1787 because doing so would have caused the South to leave the Union and thus escape the influence of (to use Lincoln's words) the "abstract truth applicable to all men at all times" of human equality, as proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence of 1776.

The Founders hoped to contain slavery within reasonable bounds and allow the principle of equality to undermine residual justifications for "the peculiar institution." West does not hesitate to point out the limits of these principled compromises; he writes of "the incomplete founding." He suggests that the Founders were perhaps too concerned with the self-preservation and dominance of the white race. He shows that self-interest, combined with an Enlightenment faith in Progress, made them overly complacent about slavery's fate: History would take care of it for them!

After establishing that the Founders did actually mean what they said about human equality in the Declaration, West notes that the Constitution was not fundamentally a pro-slavery document. Its slavery "scaffolding," in Frederick Douglass's phrase, in no way denies the humanity of blacks. Following the insights of Douglass and the recent scholarship of Robert Goldwin, West argues that the Founders deliberately avoided sullying their new Constitution with even the *word* "slavery."

West is weakest when reflecting on tensions in the Founders' thought. For example, he defends the Founders' opposition to the full "liberation" of women on the grounds that it could have undermined the family, an indispensable pillar of a free society. But this is hard to reconcile with the principle of equality, and we need a more honest confrontation with the ambiguities inherent in the idea of equality than West provides.



Some conservatives, on the other hand, have complained that the Founders' equality principle set in motion a process whereby rights and freedoms are endlessly extended and reinterpreted to the point where they take "priority over community, family, and even nature," as one critic put it. Against this, West argues that the Founders, with their measured understanding of liberty and equality and their sober defense of constitutional democracy, cannot be held responsible for contemporary relativism and radical egalitarianism. He also defends equality and the idea of a common human nature against naysayers, whether they are conservative or multiculturalist. But West is not always sufficiently sensitive to the way that the idea of equality, true in itself, gives rise to a distempered passion for equality that threatens freedom and human excellence. To admit this danger in no way entails a rejection of our founding principles, as West seems to suggest.

In short, West has written a powerful vindication of our common civic faith. But his book is less helpful in navigating some of the tensions inherent in that faith.

Daniel J. Mahoney is chairman of the department of political science at Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts.

THE CLAUSEWITZ OF THE CULTURE WARS

By Paul A. Cantor

Literature Lost: Social Agendas and the Corruption of the Humanities
By John M. Ellis
Yale University Press, 268 pages, $25

Disinterested observers of higher education today must be puzzled. On the one hand, trenchant critics, beginning with Allan Bloom and *The Closing of the American Mind,* have sounded powerful warnings against the assault on the great works of Western literature now being carried out on campuses in the name of political correctness. On the other hand, certain reputable academics insist these criticisms are based on mere anecdotal evidence, rooted in prejudice, and motivated by the desire of an older generation to cling to pedagogical power.

Apologists for current trends in the humanities assure us with amazing agility that the Great Books are still being taught—and that if somehow new ones were being taught instead, it would not be so bad after all. These defenders of the contemporary academy are aided by the fact that few people in the outside world can believe that things have gotten as bad in universities as critics say. People who simply describe the situation on today's campuses actually risk looking like extremists.

That is why John Ellis's *Literature Lost* makes such a valuable contribution. With remarkable lucidity, Ellis reveals how the current obsession with analyzing literature solely in terms of race, class, and gender is impoverishing the study of the humanities for a whole generation of students. The broad range of evidence Ellis provides cannot be dismissed as merely anecdotal, and the measured tone of his critique assures us that he is no extremist. Ellis demonstrates a solid grasp of details in a wide range of subfields within literary studies, yet never loses sight of the larger picture. He unerringly goes for the intellectual jugular. In short, he is the Clausewitz of today's culture wars. If you are going to read one book about

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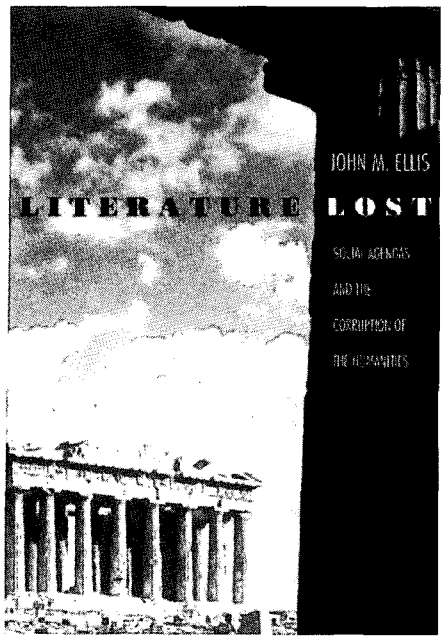


the state of the humanities today, it should be *Literature Lost.*

It is especially delightful to watch Ellis turn the tables on his politically correct opponents. Left-wing critics are always "demystifying" traditional authors, arguing that their view of the world is rooted in prejudice and class interest. But Ellis demonstrates that today's radicals are at least as guilty of pursuing personal agendas: "It is the intellectual snobbery and elitism of many of the literati that politically correct egalitarianism appeals to; their partiality to literary Marxism is based not on its economic theory but on its hostility to business and the middle class." Above all, Ellis perceptively analyzes how the gospel of multiculturalism preached on campuses today provides the ideological support for affirmative action programs that are the real goal of college administrators around the country.

I would only add that earlier academic trends helped lead to the current dominance of race-class-gender criticism. The "New Criticism" in literary studies that prevailed during the 1950s and '60s prepared the way for deconstructionism and other baleful fads in the 1970s and '80s. In concentrating on purely aesthetic aspects of writing, the New Critics obscured literature's larger function of building culture, and I for one am not surprised that students have flocked to discussing controversial issues such as race, class, and gender, rather than merely studying literature for its irony, ambiguity, and figurative language, as the New Critics insisted.

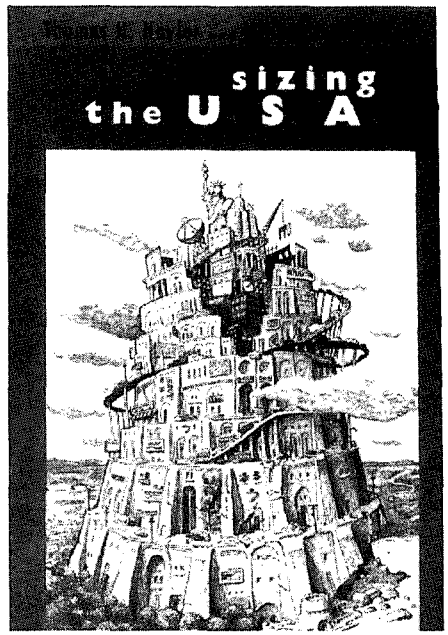
Literature Lost eloquently reminds us that great literature embodies the wealth and complexity of human experience. Ellis thus provides an effective counterweight to the narrowmindedness and impoverishment of contemporary literary criticism: "How ironic that diversity has become a buzzword of race-gender-class criticism when that criticism is committed to ignoring the true diversity of literature."

Paul Cantor is a professor of English at the University of Virginia.

A LONG PATH TO LOCALISM

By Paul Gottfried

Downsizing the U.S.A.
By Thomas H. Naylor & William H. Willimon,
Eerdmans, 289 pages, $25



In this proposal for a decentralized United States, Thomas H. Naylor and William H. Willimon throw many rhetorical bones to their allies on the Left, yet occasionally sound like conservative communitarians. The authors believe that local governments are more likely to be in touch with their citizens than larger administrations, and that our federal and state governments lack motivation to limit their powers or heed their subjects.

Naylor and Willimon view small towns and villages as the preferred context for democratic rule. They point to Vermont and other gentrified rural areas as illustrations of how face-to-face democracy can work. They don't shun hard questions—such as the need to limit immigration into a regionalized and localized America practicing democratic choice, and the right of self-governing citizens to be free from intrusive managerial or judicial authorities.

They gloss over other stumbling blocks, however. They assume that today's "living Constitution," reinterpreted continually by the legal profession and the media, can easily be waved aside. They also assume rather blithely that the American people (75 percent of whom still believe the IRS "works fine") will soon have a change of heart and wish to return to a Jeffersonian vision of political life.

Naylor and Willimon are excited by the idea that local, citizen-controlled government may restrict big business more zealously than federal and state administrators currently do. Whether for ecological reasons or because of perceived communal interests, empowered citizens may limit access to chain stores, they suggest, or place severe operating restrictions on other commercial enterprises.

In one chapter, Naylor and Willimon explain that Virginia and several other states entered the Union while reserving a right to secede. There are some issues, however, that history has already settled and that are not likely to be reopened without some dramatic shifts in popular sentiment. The authors' impassioned plea for decentralized government is written in the hope that this shift will someday occur.

Paul Gottfried's latest book, After Liberalism, *is forthcoming from Princeton University Press.*

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TAE LIVE continued from page 21.

Evans. The majority of the new country artists are small-town people who grew up in church—really middle-American, leaning Southern. I think they're reflective of the majority of Americans as opposed to pop or R&B music. That tends to be a reflection of one of the two coasts.

TAE: Does a person have to be from the South to appreciate country music?

QUIGLEY: There are a lot of people on the Upper East and West Sides of Manhattan who could really enjoy country. Country is a lifestyle statement, not just a musical direction dictated by a couple of guys in Nashville.

ADKINS: Being a fan of country music has nothing to do with where you're from, or what kind of environment you grew up in. It's just music that's about everyday life.

TAE: So you don't have to be Southern to write or perform it either?

HOWARD: Well, I grew up in Detroit, but I studied the great country writers of my youth. I also studied Irving Berlin's work and such songs as "Some Enchanted Evening" and "Georgia on My Mind." I'm a songwriter, but Ernest Tubb was my hero. I chose country music on purpose because it touched me and moved me more than anything else. I was a 12-year-old kid who was very much a virgin, but I was touched by these mature, adult songs about divorces and married people breaking up. Emotionally I responded to that. I said, "Wow! I love these kinds of songs. I wish I could write them." I got here when I was 33, and that's when I turned pro—1960.

TAE: How has the business changed since those days?

ANDERSON: When I came here, there were maybe three or four record companies and three or four publishing companies and 80 stations playing country music back then, so the whole universe was so much smaller. When a record company signs a new artist today, they commit hundreds of thousands of dollars to break him in. They go in and cut albums, hire bands, give them buses, and then they do videos and they put them out on the road and all this kind of stuff.

HOWARD: And unless you have a contract like Elvis had, every dime is charged to you. This is your career. They loan you this money. They're bankers—and they're banking on you to pay back the loan.

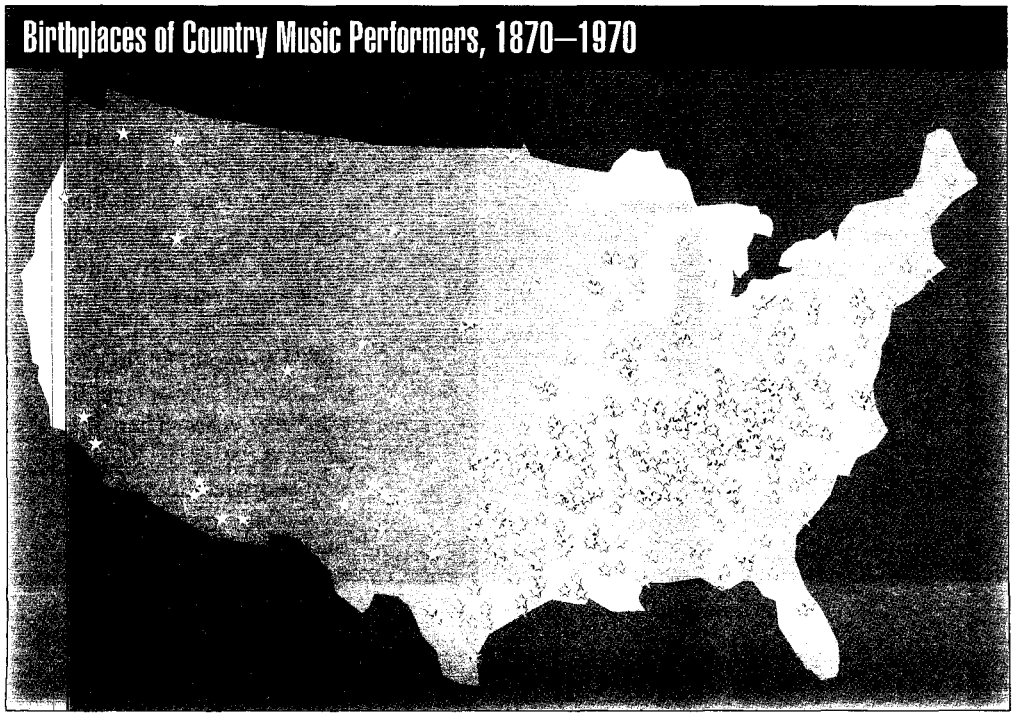
ANDERSON: I was told, "Okay, we'll put out a little 45 rpm record and see what happens." The investment was $2,500 to $3,000. I bet it wasn't over $5,000 to cut the first record. When they invest in a Sara Evans or another new artist, I hear that the figure is around $750,000. And they start making a lot of decisions by committee. One man signed me. He said, "Well, I like the way you sound, I like your songs, we'll go in and make a record." Today, it's got to go by 14 committees. I'm glad I'm not out there trying to get started.

CHAPMAN: Success breeds volume, and it's just amazing how many young writers, artists, and musicians there are in town. I've been here 21 years, and I literally did walk up and down Music Row trying to break into the business. I felt very free to go into any publishing company. Now, everybody's afraid that they're going to get swamped with people. They just don't have time to do it. Then there's the fear of litigation. If a cassette comes in that has a phrase in it that winds up on one of their artists' records that turns into a million-seller, that guy's going to come back and file a lawsuit. I would hate to be a new artist or writer in town today. But somehow the cream continues to rise. If there's one who's great, he just jumps out of the pack like you can't believe. It's like, "Wow! Have you heard this guy?" Suddenly there will be a buzz. He'll play the Bluebird Cafe, and you can't get in, and soon somebody will sign him.

ARNOLD: Radio stations are running the business now. They won't play a person my age. But I've got an audience out there that even I marvel at. I'm 79 years old, and four weeks ago I did a five night engagement at a new hotel in Las Vegas and when I arrived, it was sold out. Radio takes a young artist and plays his records a few years. Then they drop them.

TAE: What advice do you have for new artists?

HOWARD: Find some of the greatest songs about life—raw, happy, sad. This town could be had.



Encyclopedia of Southern Culture ed. Charles Reagan Wilson & William Ferris

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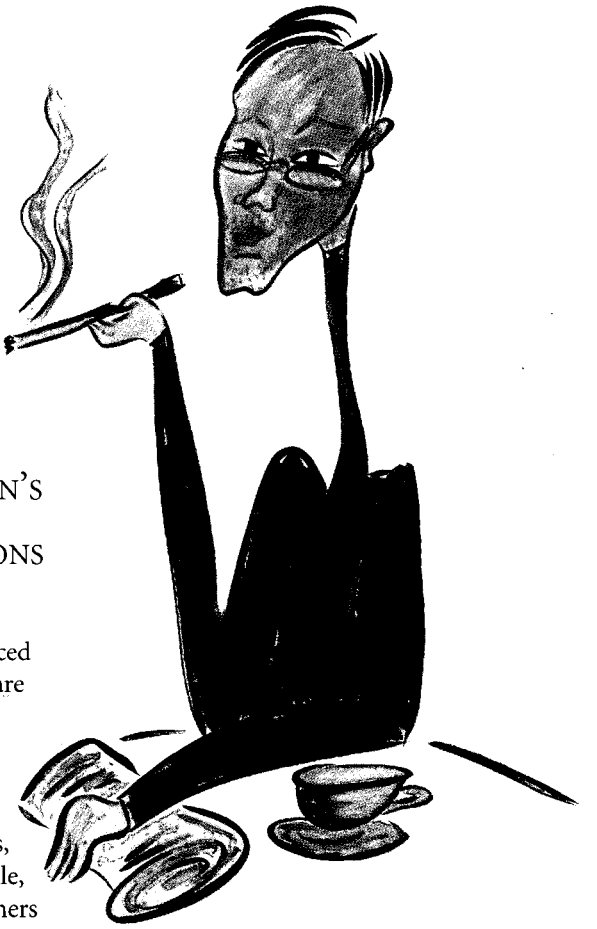

SUMMARIES OF IMPORTANT NEW RESEARCH FROM THE NATION'S UNIVERSITIES, THINK TANKS, AND INVESTIGATIVE PUBLICATIONS

POLITICS

How to Fire a Bureaucrat

Walter Olson, "Fixing the Civil Service Mess," in City Journal *(Autumn 1997), Manhattan Institute, 52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, New York 10017.*

If we're ever going to increase the competence of the state and shrink its size, more efficient ways must be found to fire incompetent bureaucrats. But outmoded rules ensure that civil servants are hired for the wrong reasons and are incredibly hard to fire. Manhattan Institute fellow Walter Olson believes recent reforms in Georgia provide innovative ways of downsizing government.

In 1883, Congress passed the Pendleton Act, which created a "civil service" where employees were supposedly hired on their merit, not on party loyalty. In the twentieth century, the process of hiring and firing bureaucrats hardened. In 1944, veterans were given the right to appeal their dismissal from the government, and in 1962 all federal workers were given the chance to contest their firings. Union lobbying ultimately ensured that most federal bureaucrats acquired tenure upon being hired. Meanwhile, lawyers successfully claimed that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 meant that no test could be used for government hiring if it caused fewer women and minorities to be hired. The result: tests that anyone could pass. For example, New York City's Department of Sanitation used to time how quickly an applicant dumped a loaded trash basket. Then courts forced the test to be changed so applicants are tested with an empty basket. The result: 98 percent of all applicants now pass the Department of Sanitation exam.

But the civil service, Olson argues, can be reformed. Oregon, for example, replaced tenure for newly hired teachers with two-year contracts. Two years ago, Georgia passed a law ending tenure for anyone hired by the state after July 1, 1996. When two Georgia prison guards were caught using cocaine, the one hired before July 1996 stayed on the state's payroll, appealing his case; the one hired under the new system was fired.

The nineteenth-century reformers who created the civil service, Olson argues, wanted a system that was "hard to get into, but not hard to get out of." If we "want to take government seriously again," we should ensure government managers have a hard time hiring new people, but an easy time sacking them.

ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

The Tobacco Money Fraud

W. Kip Viscusi, "From Cash Crop to Cash Cow: How Tobacco Profits State Governments," in Regulation *(Summer 1997), Cato Institute, 1000 Massachusetts Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.*

Recently, the attorneys general of 40 states made a settlement in which tobacco companies promise to pay the states $368 billion to cover the public health costs of tobacco smoking. But Kip Viscusi of Harvard Law School believes the tobacco settlement is based on a faulty premise. The government, he argues, does not lose money from smokers; it reaps substantial gains.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, smokers on the average have their lives shortened by between 18 and 36 percent because of tobacco. In addition, smokers tend to work more hazardous jobs. By not living longer, Viscusi calculates, "smokers save society about $25 billion to $30 billion in pension and nursing home costs annually"—or about 32 cents a pack. In addition, smokers on average pay 24 cents per pack in federal taxes and 29 cents in state taxes. Thus every pack a smoker purchases benefits private companies and the state a total of 85 cents.

Viscusi's calculations also show that the benefits smokers give to state governments outweigh the costs. In highly taxed New York, for example, smokers cost state health care plans 6.8 cents per pack and force the state to spend 2.7 cents of tax revenue. But New York then saves 5.8 cents per pack on nursing homes, 7.6

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cents on lower pensions, 3.4 cents on miscellaneous costs, as well as taxing the smoker 56 cents per pack. The net state benefits: 59.4 cents for every pack sold. In lightly taxed Virginia, which only charges 2.5 cents per pack in excise taxes, the state still benefits by 10.2 cents for every pack sold, Viscusi calculates.

While state attorneys general have denounced such cost-benefit calculations as "ghoulish," they have not provided any evidence these calculations are inaccurate. If smokers pay for their health costs through existing taxes, Viscusi asks, why should state governments then demand hundreds of billions from tobacco companies for costs that smokers already pay?

Cable TV on the Roller Coaster

Thomas W. Hazlett and Matthew L. Spitzer, Public Policy Toward Cable Television: The Economics of Rate Controls. *American Enterprise Institute/MIT Press, 55 Hayward Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138.*

Cable television may be the industry where regulators have changed their mind most often. In the past 15 years, Congress has deregulated most cable TV rates, then reimposed price controls, and then partially deregulated prices again. But while the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has imposed endless changes that have boosted its budget and generated plenty of work for telecommunications lawyers, Thomas W. Hazlett, an economist at the University of California (Davis) and Matthew L. Spitzer, a law professor at the University of Southern California, suggest the FCC's endless revisions of the rules have probably made things worse.

Cable TV operators have always been able to charge what they like for premium channels such as Showtime and HBO. In 1984, Congress allowed most cable operators to charge what they wanted for basic service, while protecting the operators' monopolies by mandating that all cable franchises be approved by municipalities.

After deregulation, cable prices appeared to soar. A widely publicized 1991 report from the General Accounting Office (GAO) claimed that the average monthly cable bill had risen by 61 percent since deregulation. But the authors argue that these statistics are misleading. Adjusted for inflation, basic cable TV prices only rose by 36 percent from 1987-91. Customers were also receiving more for their money, since most operators were adding channels during this period. According to the GAO, just before deregulation, the average basic cable package offered 27 channels. By April 1991, the average had risen to 35 channels.

In 1992, after numerous alarmist articles about rising rates, Congress reimposed price controls over basic service (in the only bill passed by Congress over President Bush's veto). In 1993, the FCC ordered a 10 percent cut in basic rates, which was followed by another 7 percent cut in 1994. Consumer groups and the FCC championed the price caps, claiming that cable TV users would save billions. But Hazlett and Spitzer claim that consumers were harmed by the bill.

The 1992 cable bill generated miles of red tape. The FCC hired 240 people just to create new cable TV regulations. Many of the new regulations were over 500 pages long. The cable TV operators responded by hiring an exorbitant number of lawyers. In 1993, one operator announced it would spend $21 million to satisfy the 1992 regulations.

Many provisions in the 1992 bill also reduced cable quality. For example, one section reinstated requirements that cable operators carry all local broadcast stations. The result: cable operators dropped high-quality cable networks off the air to make room for little-watched independent stations. As a result, C-SPAN, to take just one example, lost 4.2 million subscribers in 1993 and 1994.

Faced with price caps, cable TV operators tended to reduce the quality of basic cable. Consumers frequently found that such popular networks as TBS and Discovery were now considered "premium" channels for which they would have to pay extra. Cable operators also responded to the 1992 cable act by reducing money spent on upgrades (such as replacing copper cables with fiber-optic ones) and by increasing their debt load.

In 1996, Congress removed price controls on basic cable and allowed telephone companies to compete against cable operators. But cable operators still are more regulated than their competitors in the direct-broadcast, satellite, and wireless TV industries.

Given the expanded choices consumers had when cable was deregulated and the poorer quality cable that resulted from re-regulation, Hazlett and Spitzer suggest that removing the regulatory burden on cable consumers helps the public. "The surprising result," they conclude, "is that unregulated monopoly can be superior to regulated monopoly for consumers."

The Wages of Skin

Robert I. Lerman, Meritocracy Without Rising Inequality? Wage Rate Differences Are Widening by Education and Narrowing by Gender and Race. *Urban Institute, 2100 M Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.*

Feminists and affirmative action proponents have long argued that America's employers arbitrarily depress the wages of women and minorities. But American University economist Robert Lerman points to recent Census Bureau data which suggest employers are more interested in your brain, not your skin color or gender.

Between 1984-95, according to the Census Bureau, the wages of white males only rose by 4 percent, while the earnings of black men rose by nearly 13 percent. Meanwhile, white female wages rose over

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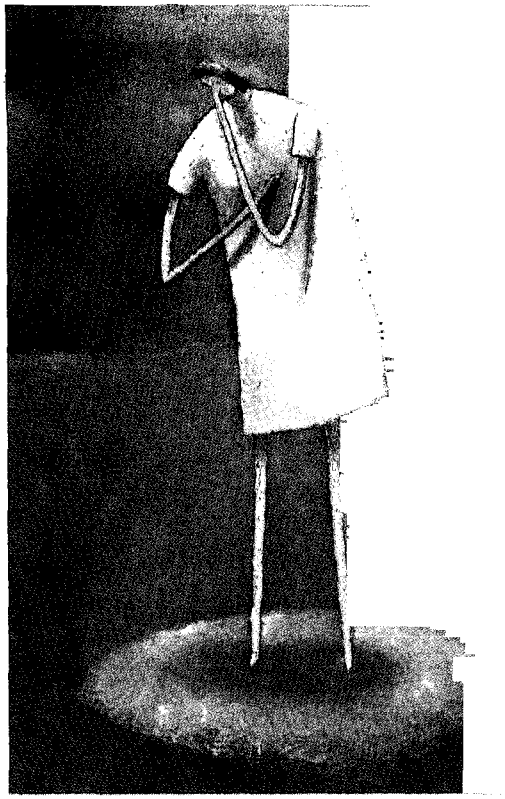

17 percent and black female wages rose by more than 20 percent. In 1984, white men earned about 27 percent more than black men; by 1995, white males were earning 18 percent more than black men. The gap between the wages of white and black women fell from 8.7 percent to 6 percent during the same period.

The greatest wage increases went to workers who stayed in school. While the wages of white men who dropped out of high school fell by nearly 5 percent between 1984-95, wages of white men who were graduated from college rose by almost 9 percent. High school dropouts overall saw their wages drop by 1.5 percent, but college graduates saw their wages rise by over 8 percent, while those who earned a graduate degree enjoyed nearly a 12 percent wage rise (with women who earned masters or doctorates seeing their income rise by 20 percent).

Lerman cautions that such statistics are less hopeful when the long-term nonemployed are included in the calculations. Yet those who remain working should expect their wages to rise: "Rewards are becoming based less on race and gender and more on education and skill."

Free Trade Fires Up Kansas City

Richard Nadler, "Miracle on I-35," in Policy Review *(November/December 1997), Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Avenue N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.*

Before the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was passed in 1993, critics such as H. Ross Perot argued that the agreement would lead to a "giant sucking sound" as U.S. jobs went south of the border. Yet NAFTA has become a substantial American job creator and the economic growth ensured by NAFTA has not been limited to border towns. Richard Nadler, editor of *K.C. Jones*, a political newsletter, shows how employers in Kansas City benefit from freer trade.

NAFTA lowered the average tariff for U.S. goods sold to Mexico by over 7 percent, increasing the appetite of Mexicans for U.S. imports. Missouri's exports of electronics, machinery, chemical products, and transportation equipment to Mexico rose from $540 million in 1993 to more than $1 billion in 1996. Kansas's sales of grain, livestock, and cars to Mexico rose from $187 million to $643 million over just three years.

Many of Kansas City's largest employers have seen their sales to Mexico steadily increase. The city's Ford plant sold over 20,000 pickups to Mexico in 1997 alone—ensuring 500 new jobs. Smaller employers also benefited. Western Forms International, which makes aluminum support systems for buildings made of concrete, saw its foreign sales—many to Mexico—rise from $1 million to $10 million from 1992-96, a spurt that helped boost the company's labor force from 75 to 200.

Transportation deregulation has also helped. Trucking deregulation ensures steady work for Kansas City's 300 trucking firms, delivering goods on the "massive river of trade" on Interstate 35 between Mexico and Kansas City. Railroad deregulation helped push the Kansas City Southern Railroad (KCSR) towards efficiency and profitability. KCSR recently teamed with Mexico's Transportation Maritima Mexicana to acquire 80 percent of the stock of Mexico's recently privatized Northeast Railway. If Treasury Department plans to base Customs inspectors in Kansas City are implemented, the result could be trains traveling several thousand miles nonstop from Kansas City to the Mexican deepwater port of Lazaro Cardenas.

The story of Kansas City's exports, Nadler concludes, once again shows how lower tariffs lead to economic growth. "The wise trade policies of the Reagan, Bush, and Clinton administrations," he writes, "have brought the benefits of global trade and competition to the American heartland."

SOCIETY

America: Pro-choice and Pro-life

Everett Carll Ladd and Karlyn H. Bowman, Public Opinion About Abortion: Twenty-five Years After Roe v. Wade. *AEI Press, 1150 17th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.*

A quarter-century ago the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe* v. *Wade* declared abortion legal in all 50 states. Since then, the controversy over abortion has remained quite heated. But Everett C. Ladd of the University of Connecticut's Institute of Social Inquiry and Karlyn H. Bowman of the American Enterprise Institute suggest that both pro-life and pro-choice forces should study public opinion. They will find that "opinion is not only clear; it is also complex."

"Most Americans," Ladd and Bowman report, "are at once pro-choice and pro-life." Between 1983 and 1995, a CBS News/*New York Times* poll found that many Americans (57 percent in 1983, dropping to 46 percent 12 years later) say abortion is murder. Most also say that they are personally against abortion and that the bad effects of abortion outweigh the good.

But Americans also tend not to favor banning abortion entirely. Polls taken by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) from 1972-96 show that between 83 and 91 percent of Americans favor allowing abortion when a woman's life is in danger, with slightly smaller majorities supporting abortion when a woman is raped or when the baby might have birth defects.

But a majority of Americans *do* want abortion to be restricted. Majorities in the NORC surveys consistently opposed abortion for low-income women who couldn't afford any more children, married women who didn't want to have any

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more children, or unmarried women who didn't want to marry their partners. A 1996 Gallup survey found that while 64 percent of Americans surveyed thought abortion should be legal in the first trimester of pregnancy, 65 percent and 82 percent of Americans favored outlawing abortion in the second and third trimesters, respectively.

Ladd and Bowman suggest that "Opinion on abortion remains very much what it was in 1973, when the *Roe* v. *Wade* decision was handed down. Americans do not want to outlaw abortion, but neither do they feel that it should be completely unrestricted."

An Armed Society is a Polite Society

Jeffrey R. Snyder, Fighting Back: Crime, Self-Defense, and the Right to Carry a Handgun. *Cato Institute, 1000 Massachusetts Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.*

In 1987 Florida passed a "shall-issue" law, which required police to issue a permit to carry a concealed gun to any citizen who passed a training course and did not have a criminal record. Since then, 23 other states have issued similar laws. Critics claimed that shall-issue laws would result in blood in the streets from heavily armed vigilantes. But Jeffrey R. Snyder, a contributor to *The American Enterprise*, argues that "shall-issue" laws have helped citizens protect themselves without increasing crime or vigilantism.

Weapon-permit laws are surprisingly old. The first laws prohibiting concealed weapons were enacted in the South before the Civil War, probably due to Southern fears of revolts from knife-wielding slaves. But until the 1920s, most states allowed people to carry any weapon they liked, so long as they carried it in the open. (Virginia, Maine, and Nevada still allow people to carry guns in the open.)

In the 1920s, states fearing anarchists and immigrants passed "Sullivan laws," which required handgun purchasers to obtain police permits. Faced with such punitive measures, the National Rifle Association crafted a compromise in which states allowed a relatively free market in the sale of weapons, but required owners to obtain police permits before they could *carry* a handgun.

Police, however, tended to issue few permits. From 1984-92, for example, the Los Angeles Police Department issued no handgun permits. In Denver, police chief Ari Zavaras issued only 45 permits for the entire city, claiming that fearing for your life was "not a compelling reason to have a permit." Among the people denied a permit by the Denver police was talk-show host Alan Berg, who was later assassinated by white supremacists.

Since Florida enacted its shall-issue law, the state has issued over 457,000 licenses, for about 1.6 percent of the state's population. Of those rejected, only 1,200 were turned down for having a criminal record, showing that in general criminals "are not applying for permits to carry guns." Between 1987 and 1997, only 85 Florida permit-holders had their gun licenses revoked for committing a crime with a firearm. Given the very low number of permits revoked, Snyder argues, "permit-holders are not creating law enforcement problems."

Why haven't gun permit-holders committed more crimes? Snyder cites research by criminologist Gary Kleck, who argues that three-quarters or more of the two million annual incidents involving guns do not involve a weapon being fired. "The mere display of a firearm," Snyder con-

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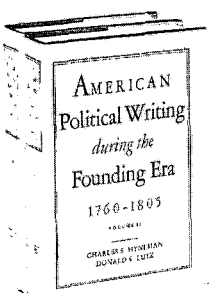

These volumes provide a selection of seventy-six essays, pamphlets, speeches, and letters to newspapers written between 1760 and 1805 by American political and religious leaders. Many are obscure pieces that were previously available only in larger research libraries. But all illuminate the founding of the American republic and are essential reading for students and teachers of American political thought. The second volume includes an annotated bibliography of five hundred additional items for future reference. The subjects covered in this rich assortment of primary material range from consitutionalism, representation, and republicanism to freedom of the press, religious liberty, and slavery. Among the more noteworthy items reprinted, all in their entirety, are Stephen Hopkins, "The Rights of the Colonies Examined" (1764); Richard Bland, "An Inquiry into the Rights of the British Colonies" (1766); John Adams, "Thoughts on Government" (1766); Theophilus Parsons, "The Essex Result" (1778); James Madison, "Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments" (1785); James Kent, "An Introductory Lecture to a Course of Law Lectures" (1794); Noah Webster, "An Oration on the Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence" (1802); and James Wilson, "On Municipal Law" (1804).

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tends, "is, most of the time, all that is necessary to bring about an end to the crime." Moreover, most gun-owners are responsible people who "will not change their character, or fundamental nature, or their actions" simply because they can legally carry a weapon.

Other evidence shows that legalizing weapons-carrying among the law-abiding reduces crime and personal injury. Therefore, Snyder concludes, "shall-issue" laws advance an important freedom—the ability of citizens to protect themselves against criminals—without harming society.

SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT

Mine and Thine

David Gerard, The Mining Law of 1872: Digging a Little Deeper. *PERC, 502 South 19th Avenue #211, Bozeman, Montana 59718.*

Most of the laws passed by Congress in the nineteenth century have long since been superseded, yet America's mines are still largely governed by a law that's over 125 years old. David Gerard, a research associate at PERC, an environmental think tank, suggests it's time for Congress to overhaul the Mining Law of 1872.

Under the law, anyone can search for minerals on federal lands without a permit. If a claimant finds valuable minerals, he can stake a claim and pay an annual fee of $100. A mining claim supersedes all other uses for the land. Should the claimant show that he's ready to start a mine, he can acquire a patent to the minerals for a charge of approximately $2.50 to $5 an acre (a fee that hasn't been raised since 1872), and then mine without paying the federal government any additional royalties.

Environmentalists charge that the fees miners pay to acquire mineral rights are absurdly low and that the Mining Law has no provisions for environmental protection. But Gerard notes that the fee for obtaining a title is misleading, since lots of legal work must be done before title can be acquired. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) estimates that the average legal bill for starting a mine on BLM lands is $38,000.

Once a patent is acquired, it is quite valuable. In the mid-1980s, one claimant successfully filed 37 mining patents on land near Yucca Mountain, Nevada, after the Department of Energy announced it was planning to use Yucca Mountain as a nuclear disposal site. The federal government ultimately paid $249,500 rather than contest the patents.

Only 36 percent of federally owned land is not available for mining. Miners cannot stake claims on military bases, national parks, national monuments, or national wilderness areas. But at most, Gerard calculates, about 7 million acres of BLM land is claimed by miners, "less than two percent of total federal land holdings in the West." Since nine out of ten claims do not result in functioning mines, mining on federal lands is relatively small. Moreover, miners have to obey the same federal and state environmental laws as everyone else. Both the Forest Service and the BLM require that miners reforest any federal land once a mine closes, a measure that provides further environmental protection.

Gerard agrees with environmentalists that a reformed mining law should include a rise in the permit fee and a royalty similar to those paid by holders of federal oil and gas leases. But he agrees with miners on simplifying the legalities of acquiring a patent. Any reform, he concludes, should be done so as not to "bring more political control over public land use."

OTHER COUNTRIES

Not So Efficient Japanese

Michael J. Oakes, "Shaky Recovery," in Reason *(January 1998), 3415 South Sepulveda Boulevard #400, Los Angeles, California 90034.*

Three years after the devastating earthquake in Kobe, Japan, much of the city is still a mess. The reasons why Kobe still has not recovered, notes writer Michael J. Oakes, shed light on the problems caused by Japanese bureaucracy.

When the Kobe earthquake occurred, many people around the world offered assistance, but efforts were thwarted by Japan's bureaucrats. Written requests were required of volunteers before they could receive permission to help. U.S. doctors were barred from going to Kobe because they lacked credentials to practice medicine in Japan. Plumbers from other Japanese cities were turned away because they lacked licenses to repair Kobe's toilets. When Nippon Motorola offered to donate cellular telephones, Japanese officials refused the donation because they did not want to issue new telephone identification numbers.

Much of Kobe remains in ruins because of Japan's punitive property laws. Taxes are quite high when a piece of land is sold; thus most buildings end up sitting on land owned by *several* individuals or companies. When a building collapses, these property owners debate endlessly over who should rebuild. Moreover, Japanese laws are strongly biased toward tenants: when a property changes hands, the new landlord must accept an existing lease for ten years.

Adding to the problem, officials in Hyogo Prefecture (equivalent to a U.S. state) announced a master plan shortly after the quake for rebuilding Kobe. This plan involved seizing 11 percent of the city's land and ensured that prefectural officials in effect had veto power over any private landowners who wanted to rebuild. The planners, Oakes notes, politicized the process of rebuilding, as different neighborhood groups debated what changes they wanted to make.

Given this failure of government, the residents of Kobe now want even more public aid as their ruined city struggles to rebuild. They "know they are in a mess, and they know government has something to do with it. But they have been led much of their lives by government policy—from what textbooks to read and what tests to take. They are frustrated and confused."

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Opinion Pulse

EDITED BY KARLYN BOWMAN

SOUTHERN FOCUS

Southerners take great pride in their region, something the editors of TAE found when they spent a week taking Nashville's pulse in December. A number of things, including distinctive expressions, set the South apart. Southerners are more conservative and traditional than non-Southerners. They are more likely to be regular churchgoers, to have a Bible in which important family events are recorded, and to think government should promote traditional values. Concern about crime and the environment, however, know no regional boundaries.

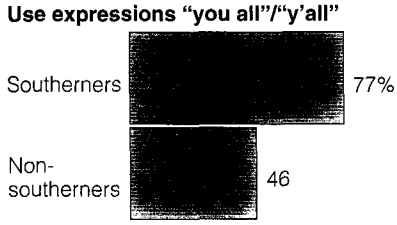
Question: **Would you say that...?**

Being a Southerner is very/somewhat important to you

Note: Fall 1997.

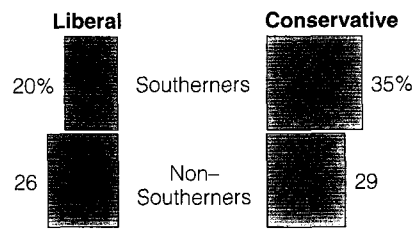
Question: **I want to ask you about the expressions "you all" and "y'all." Do you...?**

Use expressions "you all"/"y'all"



Note: Fall 1997.

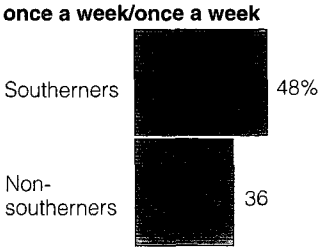
Question: **In general, when it comes to politics, do you usually think of yourself as...?**



Note: Fall 1997.

Question: **How often do you...?**

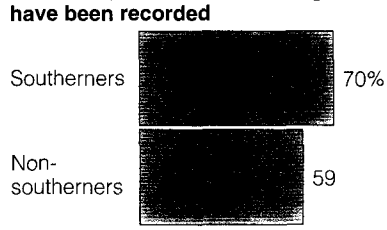
Attend church more than once a week/once a week



Note: Fall 1997.

Question: **Do you...?**

Have a family Bible in which things like births, deaths, and marriages have been recorded



Note: Spring 1996.

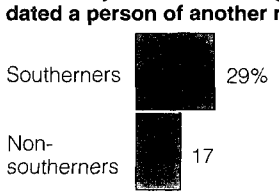
Question: **There has been a lot of talk lately about American values. Some people think....**

Government should promote traditional values

Note: Spring 1996.

Question: **Would you...?**

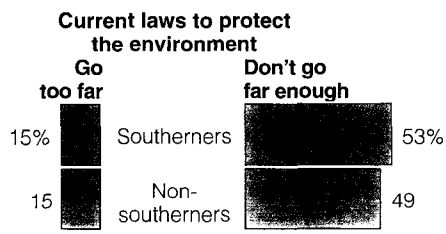
Would object if son or daughter dated a person of another race



Note: Spring1997.

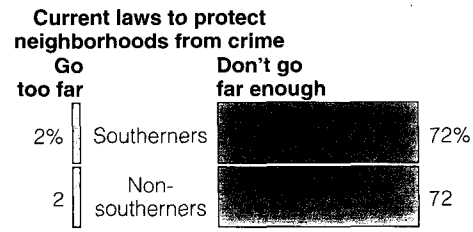
Question: **In general, what do you think about...?**

Current laws to protect the environment



Note: Fall1996.

Current laws to protect neighborhoods from crime



Source: The Southern Focus Poll is conducted by the University of North Carolina's Institute for Research in Social Science. The polls are co-sponsored by the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and the University of North Carolina's Center for the Study of the American South.

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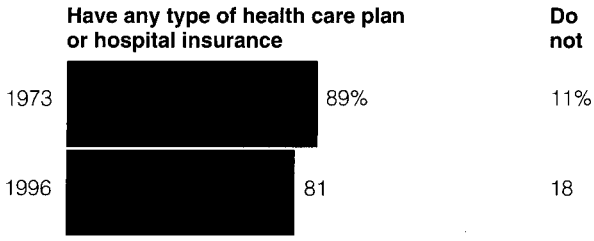
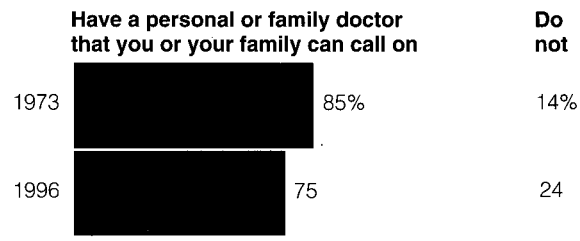
HEALTH CARE UPDATE

About 80 percent of Americans say they have health insurance, though they are less likely than in the past to have a family doctor they can call on. Health care terminology is unfamiliar to many. When asked an abstract question about recent changes, 45 percent say the health care system is getting better, 49 percent, worse. When asked about their own care, only 14 percent describe themselves as worse off.

Question: **Do you and your family...?**

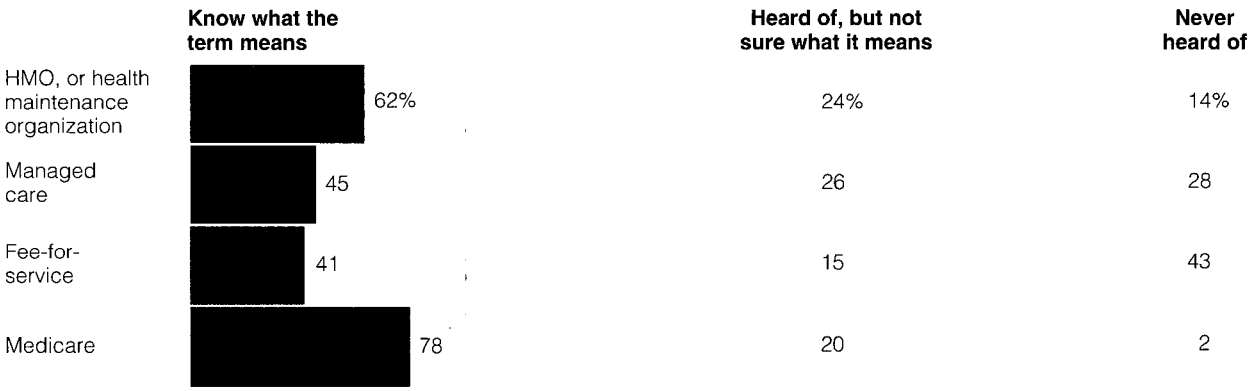


Question: **Do you...?**



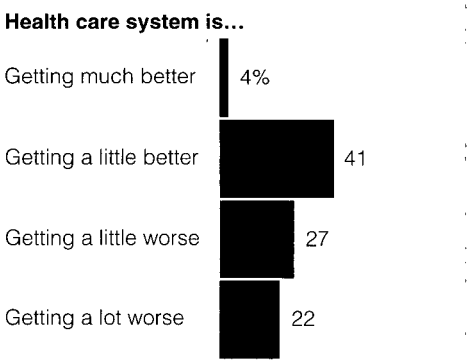
Source: Surveys by Roper Starch Worldwide, latest that of October 12–16, 1996.

Question: **Now I'm going to read you some terms having to do with health care. As I read each one, please tell me if you...?**



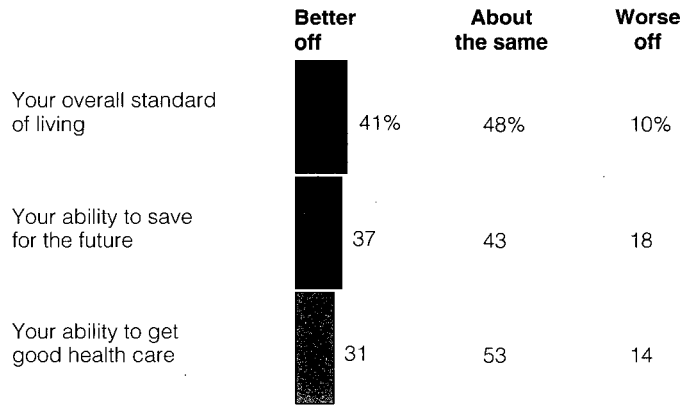
Source: Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates for the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Harvard Program on the Public and Health/Social Policy, August 22–September 23, 1997.

Question: **The health care system in this country has been undergoing major changes in the past several years. How do you feel about these changes...?**



Source: Survey by Louis Harris and Associates, August 20–26, 1997.

Question: **Compared to a few years ago, are you and your family...?**



Source: Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates for the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Harvard Program on the Public and Health/Social Policy, August 22–September 23, 1997.

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Significant majorities of those with coverage are satisfied with key aspects of their care, though cost remains a concern. Nearly eight in ten with insurance would recommend their plan to others. Far more trust their health plan to do what's right for them "just about always" or "most of the time" than trust the federal government on that score. This sentiment may explain why a significant 40 percent say additional government regulation isn't worth it because it would raise costs too much.

Question: **For each specific item I name, please tell me whether you are...?**

Very/somewhat satisfied with...	All covered by a health plan	Those in: Traditional fee-for-service care	Those in: HMOs
Quality of health care you receive	90%	92%	88%
Costs	73	65	79
Ability to get a doctor's appt. when you want one	85	87	83
Ability to see top quality specialists	85	90	81

Source: Survey by ABC News, August 24–27, 1997.

Question: **Thinking of all your medical care needs, not just the doctor, generally speaking, how...?**

Very/fairly satisfied with...	All	Those with/in: Traditional health insurance coverage	Those with/in: Managed care
Quality of the medical care you get	73%	82%	70%
Arrangements for paying for the care you get	70	NA	NA
Availability of care when you need it	67	79	77
Cost*	52	53	69

Note: *People were asked whether the cost of their medical care was very or fairly reasonable or somewhat or very unreasonable. NA means not available.
Source: Survey by Roper Starch Worldwide, October, 12–19, 1996.

Question: **How often do you...?**

Trust your current health insurance plan to do the right thing

	Those in: Traditional fee-for-service care	Those in: Heavy managed care*
Just about always	55%	30%
Most of the time	34	46
Only some of the time	6	22
None of the time	1	1

Trust the federal government in Washington to do the right thing

Just about always	2%
Most of the time	20
Only some of the time	76

Note: *Heavy managed care is defined by Kaiser/Harvard as being required to choose doctors from a list and pay more for doctors not on the list; to select a primary care doctor or medical group; and/or to obtain a referral before seeing a specialist or doctor outside the plan.
Source: Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates for the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Harvard Program on the Public and Health/Social Policy, August 22–September 23, 1997 (for health care); ABC News, August 1997 (for federal government performance).

Question: **Would you...?**

Recommend your current health insurance plan to other people

All persons with health insurance	78%
Those in HMOs	79
Those in traditional fee-for-service plans	78

Source: Survey by ABC News, August 24–27, 1997.

Question: **The number of Americans who rely on HMOs and other managed care health plans for their health coverage continues to grow. Some people say...**

Government needs to protect consumers from being treated unfairly and not getting the care they should from managed care plans	52%
Additional government regulation isn't worth it because it would raise the cost of health insurance too much for everyone	40

Source: Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates for the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Harvard Program on the Public and Health/Social Policy, August 22–September 23, 1997.

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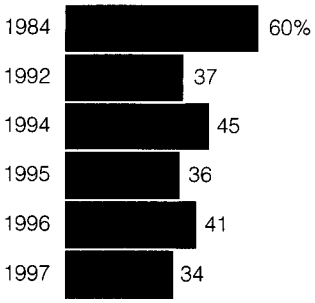
THE IRS

The proportion of the population with a favorable opinion of the IRS has dropped sharply since 1984. Most people say the agency has too much power and that recent news accounts of questionable IRS behavior are not isolated incidents. Forty-four percent say the IRS treats taxpayers worse than other agencies treat citizens. Polls show that about 20 percent have ever been audited, and more than four in ten of this group feel they were treated unfairly. Americans are divided about whether they would rather have a root canal or an IRS audit.

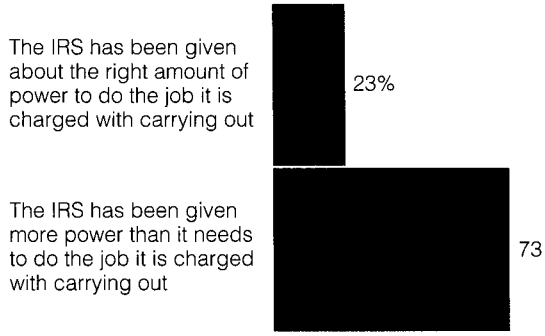
Question: **Now let me ask you about a few specific federal agencies. Is your opinion of the IRS...?**

Highly/moderately favorable opinion



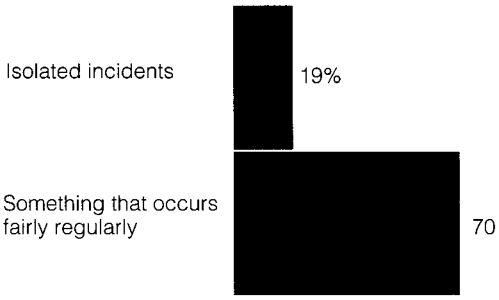
Source: Surveys by Roper Starch Worldwide, latest that of July 1997.

Question: **Which of the following statements concerning IRS power do you agree with more...?**



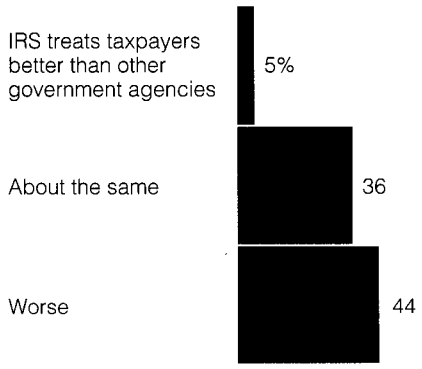
Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization for CNN/*USA Today*, September 25–28, 1997.

Question: **There have been a number of incidents in which the IRS is alleged to have behaved unethically or treated people unfairly during audits. Do you believe these were...?**



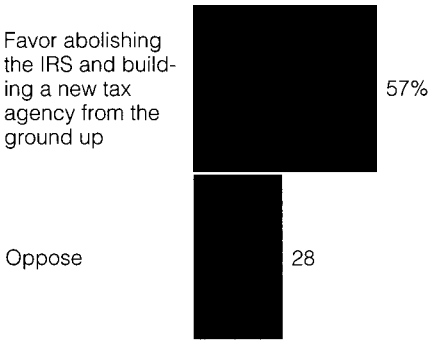
Source: Survey by NBC News/*Wall Street Journal*, October 25–27, 1997.

Question: **Does the...?**



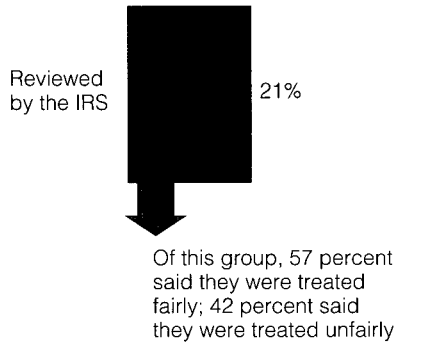
Source: Survey by Rasmussen Research, October 5, 1997.

Question: **Would you...?**



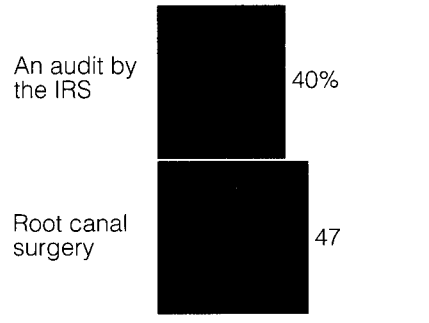
Source: Survey by Opinion Dynamics for Fox News, October 1–2, 1997.

Question: **Have you ever been...?**



Source: Survey by NBC News/*Wall Street Journal*, October 25–27, 1997.

Question: **If you had to make a choice, which of the following would you prefer...?**



Source: Survey by The Polling Company, March 17–24, 1997.

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the Mail

In arguing that Reagan's income tax cuts did not reduce government revenues ("Thank You, Ronald Reagan," Nov./Dec.), Stephen Moore presents a highly misleading picture by analyzing changes in total federal tax receipts over time. This is problematic because there were several tax increases during the 1980s outside of the income tax that would presumably help overall revenue show a rising trend. Because cuts in income taxes were a central part of Reagan's presidency, we should examine what happened to federal income tax revenues. As Gary Burtless wrote in a 1996 *Los Angeles Times* article, "Measured in constant prices, revenues from the personal and corporate income tax did not return to their 1981 level until 1987." Only by looking at each type of tax revenue does a more accurate picture emerge.

Alan Reifman
Lubbock, Texas

Stephen Moore replies:
There is one indisputable fact about the Reagan record: Federal tax receipts doubled from 1980-1990. In his letter, Alan Reifman quotes the Brookings Institution's Gary Burtless, who argues that this happened because Reagan raised the payroll tax. Meanwhile, other critics of Reaganomics have been arguing for years that supply-side tax cuts caused the budget deficit.

Well, sorry, but it has to be one or the other. It is true Reagan raised payroll taxes in 1983—one of the biggest mistakes of his presidency. But the major reason payroll taxes soared in the 1980s was that Reagan's economic policies created 18 million new jobs. When you add that many persons to the work force, tax collections will skyrocket. This is precisely the result the supply-side theory predicted.

According to the Cato Institute's Aaron Steelman in his review of *Bringing the Market Back In* (Jan./Feb.), the late Murray N. Rothbard "essentially lifted Rand's theory of rights." Where does such an implausible idea come from?

Novelist Ayn Rand claimed to have invented the concepts of natural rights and natural law, admitting only that her ideas were foreshadowed in the work of Aristotle. When the notoriously ill-read Rand saw an article in which Rothbard argued for a natural-law basis for property rights, she and her henchmen threatened to sue him for plagiarism.

Having earlier been found guilty *in absentia* at a trial in Rand's living room (for refusing to divorce his wife for being a Christian), Rothbard didn't take the novelist's nutty assertion seriously. But his colleague Ralph Raico knew that Rand was perfectly capable of bringing a suit and that Rothbard could ill afford to defend it.

Professor Raico thus drew up a response, showing that all of the concepts Rand claimed to have originated were many hundreds of years old. Knowing Rand to be especially anti-Catholic, Raico quoted only from Jesuit and Dominican priests.

Rand dropped the matter, but apparently her mythology lives on.

Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr.
The Ludwig von Mises Institute

In the BIRD'S EYE of November/December the key phrase is: "Washington...will impose on the American people a kind of incremental socialism by a million little dictates." In support, let me quote from a column in the *Chicago Tribune* by Heather Nauert, a health care consultant in Washington: "Realizing in 1994 that a complete overhaul of the current system was too big of a pill to swallow, they [Democrats] began feeding us health-care reform in doses. Beginning with the Kassebaum-Kennedy Health Insurance Reform Act and stopping briefly to add mental health parity and 48-hour maternity stay, Congress has put us on a path to nationalized health care."

She also relates how children's health care has become a funding fiasco in Minnesota: "In 1987 Minnesota passed a children's health bill funded by a tobacco tax. Originally estimated to cost $1.3 million annually, the program now bilks taxpayers and doctors for nearly $1 billion. The masterminds of the legislation soon realized that the tobacco tax would not cover all of the programs' needs and a tax was levied on doctors...because of the costly tax thousands of doctors fled that state to practice medicine elsewhere."

Walter J. Banke
South Holland, Illinois

I agree with Karl Zinsmeister: let us "shrink government to save liberty, not money" (BIRD'S EYE, Nov./Dec.). Politics should be about people taking responsibility for their own lives, as Hannah Lapp shows in her article on the Amish. Otherwise, government is handed over to the technocrats—planners, regulators, and bureaucrats—who will provide even small towns with big government, as Richard Miniter documents in his article.

Peter Bearse
via CompuServe

EDITOR'S NOTE: Diana Schaub's January/February article, "Gen X Is OK," was adapted from a paper originally presented to the Olin Center for Inquiry into the Theory and Practice of Democracy.

The American Enterprise welcomes your comments. Send to "The Mail," The American Enterprise, 1150 17th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Or fax to (202) 862-5867. Or e-mail TheAmericanEnterprise@compuserve.com. Please include your address and phone number. Published letters may be edited for length and clarity.

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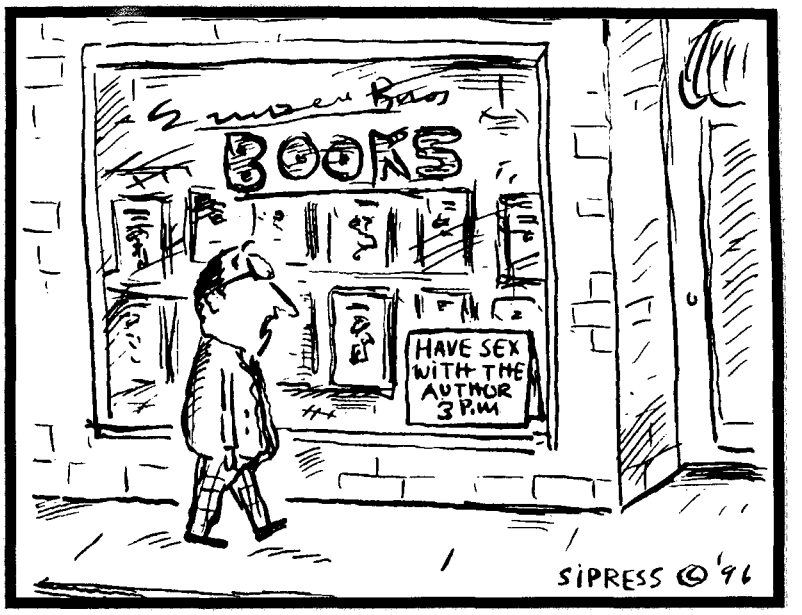

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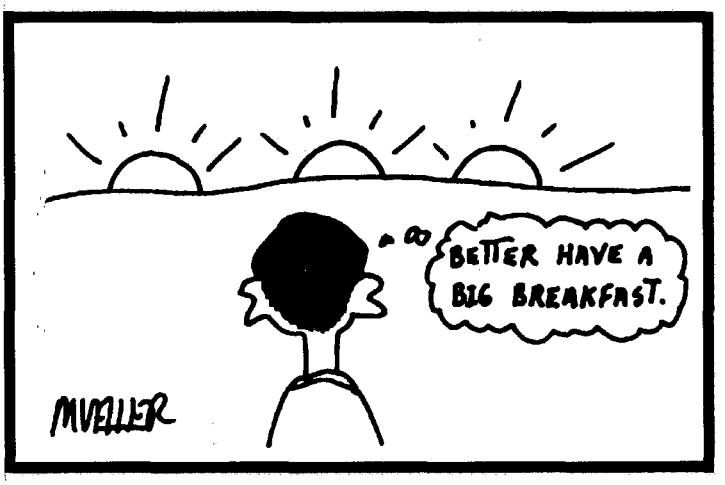

"Oh, yes. Many jumbo jets like this one now have steerage."

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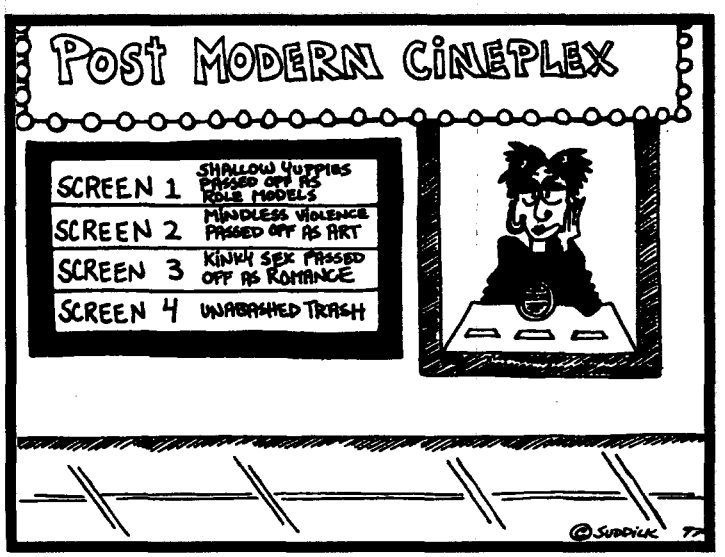

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